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# **Rural Control in an Insurgency: An Analytic Framework Applied to Guatemala and the Philippines**

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**A Research Paper**

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# **Rural Control in an Insurgency: An Analytic Framework Applied to Guatemala and the Philippines**

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**A Research Paper**

This paper was prepared by [redacted]  
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**Rural Control in an  
Insurgency: An Analytic  
Framework Applied to  
Guatemala and the Philippines**

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**Overview**

*Information available  
as of 1 November 1983  
was used in this report.*

The ability of national governments to gain or maintain control of rural communities is a key factor in dealing with Third World insurgencies. On the basis of comparative research on insurgency and counterinsurgency throughout the Third World, we conclude that rural control by government or insurgents hinges on three basic factors:

- *Attitudinal*. The capability to promote favorable attitudes among the local population and elicit support.
- *Organizational*. The capability to establish and direct local organizations—such as village administrative and governing structures, agricultural cooperatives, political parties and propaganda theater groups—for mobilizing people politically and economically.
- *Military*. The capability to protect cadre and supporters from attacks and provide the local population with security.

Insurgency movements typically place more weight on attitudinal and organizational factors than do governments involved in counterinsurgency. Moreover, governments frequently choose inappropriate programs to fight rural insurgencies. To identify the range of programs used by governments, we examined some 90 insurgency and counterinsurgency efforts since World War II. From these cases, we have identified approximately nine that governments may occasionally use. This record also shows which programs were most successful and the conditions that contributed to their success or failure. We have also formulated a system of indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of an insurgency or counterinsurgency program.

We believe that the programs and the indicators we have identified constitute a useful framework for analyzing rural insurgencies and counterinsurgency. This framework and the record from which it was drawn are described in section one of this paper. Section two applies the framework to the insurgencies in the Western Highlands of Guatemala and in the Philippines. On the basis of these case studies, we reached the following judgments:

- *Guatemalan Counterinsurgency Is Working*. During the past 18 months the government has regained or maintained control over much of the Western Highlands. Although the insurgents continue hit-and-run ambushes, they have been routed in many localities and have suffered a major loss of popular support. The government's control programs—most notably the Civil Defense Forces, which involve the Indian communities in armed self-defense of their villages—have successfully promoted

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favorable attitudes at the local level, in organizing local people, and in providing them and government cadres with military security, despite inadequate financing, personnel, and equipment. Some of the gains achieved by the deposed Rios Montt, however, are being jeopardized by the resurgence of death squads and Mejia's neglect of propaganda and political measures to gain popular support.

- *Government Control Is Gradually Deteriorating in the Philippines.* The Marcos government has failed to counter the growing Communist insurgency despite its military campaigns and well-publicized development programs. The Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army controls 18 percent of the rural villages in the Philippines, a substantial increase over the past 18 months. Manila's political, economic, and military programs look good on paper but are poorly implemented in the countryside and receive insufficient political and material support. Local officials are unable or unwilling to effect the changes necessary to offset insurgent gains. Military abuses continue to alienate the rural population. In addition, military officers—using tactics ill suited for counterinsurgency operations—are unable to achieve a military victory.

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**Preface**

This study is one of a number of assessments done in the Directorate of Intelligence on the issue of Third World insurgencies. Each of these reports focuses on a key aspect in determining the success or failure of insurgent or counterinsurgent efforts. This study on rural control draws on classified material, unclassified external contracts commissioned by the Directorate of Intelligence, as well as fieldwork by Agency analysts.

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## Rural Control in an Insurgency: An Analytic Framework Applied to Guatemala and the Philippines

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### Framework for Analysis

Counterinsurgency specialists agree that insurgencies are won or lost in the countryside. Even the strongest urban guerrilla movements—from the Hungarian patriots of 1956 to the Uruguayan Tupamaros of the 1970s—ultimately fail if they do not spread effectively to rural areas. Similarly, as Mao, Castro, and others have shown, an insurgency can be won while all major cities remain in government hands. Governments recognize this, and over the years they have devised a number of surprisingly similar programs to defeat rural insurgency. What proves successful under one set of circumstances, however, may fail miserably at another time and place. This paper attempts to describe why this happens and to establish some guidelines for effective rural control in an insurgency. We also set up criteria for measuring the control exercised by governments or insurgents, and we apply both the guidelines and the measurement criteria to ongoing insurgencies in Guatemala and the Philippines.

### Programs for Rural Control

An examination of some 90 examples since World War II reveals that insurgencies in rural areas inevitably aim at undermining the perceived legitimacy of the government through:

- Reduction or elimination of government administration, security, and economic control.
- Establishment of insurgent administration, security, and economic control alongside or in place of that of the government.
- Competition with the government in providing or promising services to the rural population.

Government counterinsurgency programs succeed or fail to the extent that they thwart the guerrilla strategy.

We have identified nine categories of programs that governments consistently use in dealing with rural insurgency. These include political and administrative

programs, local security programs, and population and resources control programs aimed at maintaining government presence in the countryside; intelligence, military, and terror programs aimed at the insurgent's shadow government and military organization; and public welfare, economic, and propaganda programs aimed at winning the "hearts and minds" of the rural population.

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### Political and Administrative

Political and administrative programs that contribute to rural control can be divided into two types: those aimed at the entire nation, such as national elections and timetables for independence, and those aimed at specific rural areas such as the appointment of popular and honest local officials. Both types of programs have had their share of successes and failures.

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**Nationwide Measures.** The key to success with regard to national measures is the perceived fairness and effectiveness of the measures. National elections, for example, are useful only if the population believes that the range of choice represents its interests and that its votes will be properly counted. Successful counterinsurgencies have stressed the importance of meeting popular calls for political reform. In Malaya, for example, the British increased Chinese and Malay participation in the colonial government and set a timetable for independence, which undercut insurgent demands for a war of national liberation. In the Philippines, Defense Minister Magsaysay turned public opinion against the Huk insurgents by moving decisively to ensure honest presidential elections in 1951 and to punish corrupt government officials and abusive military personnel. He stationed teachers as polling clerks, used ROTC cadets to guard polling places, and directed soldiers to protect voters and ballot boxes.

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The failure of government to meet local demands for political reform fuels rural support for insurgent movements. The French in Indochina were aware of social tensions, inequalities, and a rising tide of nationalism but reacted to demonstrations and uprisings with repression. Although Paris apparently recognized the need for reforms, it confined its actions to the economic and social spheres and neglected the political area. The outbreak of World War II further curtailed political freedom, exacerbating all attempts at reform. Algerian nationalist aspirations and demands for political reform were stifled in a manner similar to that in Indochina. Under the Vichy regime, which came to power after the fall of France in 1940, the Muslim community lost many of the small benefits acquired over the years. French settlers, by comparison, were given a free hand [ ]

**Local Measures.** Government administrative and political programs aimed directly at individual rural populations face a number of difficulties. One of the ironies is that the insurgents and the government frequently start on almost equal footing, at least in some rural areas. In some instances, the central government has never exercised firm control in these areas, leaving a vacuum for the guerrillas to fill. Such control as exists may be in the hands of tribal leaders, local landlords, or underpaid and largely forgotten public officials. These "administrators"—whether appointed or elected—often have little regard for the interests of the local population and few resources to deal with its problems even if they were so inclined. They are easy targets for elimination or co-optation by insurgents. In countries where the central government's bureaucracy is well established in rural areas—even if it is not popular—no vacuum exists and it is difficult for guerrillas to get started. [ ]

In the early 1970s, guerrillas in the Western Highlands of Guatemala were able to begin organizing the Indian population because the national government never had an effective permanent presence in most of the region. A similar situation has occurred in rural Columbia where many areas are isolated from Bogota and effectively ruled by local landlords. In El Salvador the insurgents at first concentrated their efforts in areas weakly controlled by San Salvador, such as Chalatenango and Morazan, but soon expanded their areas of operation with appeals to the rural population

to call for distribution of land to the peasants and removal of corrupt and abusive local officials. In contrast, no such power vacuums existed in rural Argentina and Uruguay, and consequently insurgent groups were never able to gain a permanent foothold in rural areas. [ ]

#### **Local Security**

Local security programs—those designed to protect government supporters in a rural area without major use of the central government's armed forces—generally rely either on the creation of civilian self-defense forces or on relocation of rural populations to more secure areas. Fortified villages can be an important adjunct to either type of program. The first type has generally been more effective than the second, if only because it is attempted only by governments relatively sure of the basic loyalty of their rural population. [ ]

**Civilian Self-Defense.** Civilian self-defense programs have been most effective when they have been: supervised by on-the-scene military officers, adequately equipped, representative of the entire able-bodied male population of the village on a part-time basis, free of local political or economic influences unrelated to counterinsurgency, and instrumental in bringing some nonsecurity as well as security advantages to the village. [ ]

Numerous counterinsurgencies have effectively used local irregular self-defense forces for security. Such forces provide a first line of defense against guerrilla attacks, freeing regular military forces for offensive operations. More importantly, they commit village families conspicuously to the side of the government. In Malaya, the British and Malayans recruited approximately 150,000 Home Guards to protect resettled villages, thus forcing a commitment from their Chinese inhabitants. Initially, unarmed and untrusted by the police, the Home Guard evolved into the primary government security force, protecting the rural Chinese population from the guerrillas. Home Guard units attached to neighboring Army units greatly aided the latter through their familiarity with the local terrain and society. [ ]

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The British also effectively used local defense forces in Kenya to isolate the Mau Mau from its rural Kikuyu supporters. In South Vietnam, self-defense forces were effective only when adequately supported by local Army commanders and when formed by the villagers themselves. At times, the regular military was unwilling to provide adequate weapons, training, and backup forces to villagers it viewed as having questionable loyalty to the government. This resulted in morale-damaging losses by village defense forces in encounters with better equipped local guerrillas, or when they were overrun by regular insurgent forces because of a lack of government force backup. In Thailand, a successful village self-defense program has been an important element in controlling the Communist insurgency. Volunteer Defense Companies provide full-time auxiliaries, who patrol with the provincial police, act as part-time militia in areas of significant insurgent activity, and generally obtain the commitment of local farmers to the government. [ ]

In contrast to these successes, the Burmese experience shows that the government must closely supervise village defense forces to maintain control. During the 1960s and early 1970s, the Burmese Government gave militia status to several ethnic groups and to a few warlords operating in the Shan states, a region always weakly controlled by the Rangoon government. The militia was to provide local security against the Burmese Communist Party. Instead, these groups used Rangoon's arms to fight for control of narcotics smuggling routes and territory. [ ]

**Village Relocation.** The success of relocation programs depends almost entirely on cooperation on the part of the villagers being relocated. This, in turn, depends upon: the perceived danger of staying where they are, the adequacy of the new location, the sensitivity to particular village concerns, and the adequacy of logistic support. In general, programs of village relocation to fortified villages or areas remote from insurgent influence have seldom enhanced local security. In Malaya, one of the few successful cases, the British effort to relocate rural Chinese into several hundred New Villages probably worked only because they were superior to the squalid, squatter camps where the Chinese had been living. [ ]

Most other relocation programs failed. British resettlement and village housing programs in Kenya were inadequately supported, caused much suffering and bitterness, and produced a substantial number of recruits for the Mau Mau. During their occupation of Malaya in World War II, Japanese troops forced one-fourth of the Chinese population out of the towns and cities and "settled" them along roads on the fringes of the jungle. These "squatters" became the principal supporters of the Malayan Communist Party in resistance against the Japanese, and, later, against the British colonial government. In Manchuria such Japanese tactics also failed to stem the insurgency. To break up the close relationship between the Chinese population and the Communist guerrillas, the Japanese relocated the population into newly constructed "collective hamlets." By 1937 there were more than 10,000 of these hamlets, accommodating 5.5 million persons. The program succeeded in isolating the guerrillas, but the brutality with which the Japanese troops executed the program increased popular support for the guerrillas. [ ]

In those rural parts of Algeria strongly influenced by insurgents, the French resorted to resettlement. The French Army forcibly uprooted and resettled hundreds of thousands of Algerians in the Constantine and Blida regions into more than 1,000 new villages. The French Section Administrative Specialisee administered these villages and provided security, education, and training in self-defense. The French plan called for the Algerians ultimately to form their own administrations. In practice, however, many of the villages were little better than concentration camps imprisoning sullen and uncooperative Algerians and, thus, on balance detracted from the French effort. In South Vietnam the government relocated thousands from areas under strong Vietcong influence, hoping to deprive the enemy of its population base. The relocation camps were often on marginal land that provided little chance for cultivation or other forms of employment. Embittered farmers frequently migrated back to their ancestral lands and accepted Vietcong protection. Those who remained in the camps were a major resource drain on the government and provided many recruits to the enemy. [ ]

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**Population and Resource Control**

Closely related to the local security programs are programs designed specifically to deny insurgents any cooperation—voluntary or forced—from the rural population. These programs, although inconvenient for the local population, are among the most successful in combating insurgency. They include:

- Strict screening and documentation procedures.
- Cordon and search operations.
- Roadblocks and checkpoints.
- Curfews.
- Control of movement of both people and materiel.
- Rationing.
- Protection of the rural production from seizure or taxation by insurgents. [redacted]

These programs tend to fail when they are loosely and haphazardly enforced and therefore easily avoided, when they are exploited by soldiers or policemen, or when they are so harshly enforced that loyal citizens perceive them as unnecessary hardships [redacted]

The British perfected these control techniques in Malaya and Kenya. Applied later in Cyprus and Aden, such programs again succeeded in their narrow objectives but could not compensate for widespread popular support for the insurgents. The Indian Government has also succeeded in isolating guerrillas from their base of support in its counterinsurgency effort against the Mizo National Front (MNF), a tribal separatist group. Villages in Mizo areas are fortified and under Army control. Villagers are issued identity cards and are counted twice a day by an Army representative in each village; no one is allowed to enter or leave the villages by night. Unable to operate or hide in the villages, the MNF has been forced to turn to towns and regional cities where it is possible to avoid arrest by mixing with the generally sympathetic local population. At times, MNF troops have also sought sanctuary in adjoining areas of Bangladesh. [redacted]

Vietnam is a good example of improperly implemented population control. For example, checkpoints were often used by Vietnamese Army and Regional Forces units to extort goods from merchants carrying food or other commodities to or between markets. In many instances, the checkpoints were permanently located and thus routinely avoided by Vietcong smugglers. Even when checkpoints were mobile, they were often

poorly implemented; outlying security being insufficient could not prevent their being avoided by insurgent smugglers who could see them from a distance. In some provinces, the government had better executed control programs, such as screening and documenting of the population. These too suffered, however, because their effectiveness—for example, identification of undocumented individuals—depended on the quality of implementation of related programs, such as checkpoints and intelligence recordkeeping, that were not as effective. [redacted]

Indigenous police organizations, if adequately staffed, trained, equipped, and motivated, are best suited to enforce population- and resource-control programs. Police, unlike regular military units, whose members are drawn from diverse parts of the country, are frequently locals. They are more likely to understand local conditions and be regarded by the population as a government organization with enforcement powers. They are often better trained than military forces in the investigative skills required for these operations because the procedures resemble anticrime procedures. [redacted]

**Intelligence and Counterintelligence**

To root out the insurgent cadre network and destroy their shadow government, the central government must develop effective local intelligence collection, analysis, and exploitation programs. At the same time, the government must uncover the often effective intelligence systems of the guerrillas. Governments often ignore this necessary task because they lack adequate resources for the job or because they believe such intelligence is trivial. Successful programs are usually characterized by an effective village-level intelligence collection effort against the insurgent organization that provides security for government supporters in villages and support for timely village-level military operations against the insurgents. [redacted]

[redacted]—and, as a consequence, one step ahead of the insurgents militarily—during the determinative years of the Huk rebellion. In Rhodesia, the

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Selous Scouts—trained to live undetected for extended periods in known areas of enemy activity and to radio back intelligence—provided tactical military intelligence on insurgency that was used successfully to ambush and attack numerous insurgent bands. They also used pseudoguerrilla tactics—scouts impersonated guerrillas for extended periods—to gather political intelligence in the villages. Such units demonstrate an effective alternative to placing agents or informers in villages when the local population is unwilling to cooperate with the government. [ ]

Unsuccessful programs, in contrast, are characterized by poor coordination and cooperation between government intelligence collection agencies, overreliance on single-source reporting, and often unfounded optimism. For example, the French in Indochina had a total force of about 500,000 troops, the security of operating from firm bases, and complete mastery of air operations. Yet their failure to match Vietminh capabilities to develop or exploit intelligence in the villages puts them at a fatal disadvantage. During World War II the Vietminh organization had gradually supplanted the colonial government in many parts of Vietnam, and the French were never able to reestablish their internal security apparatus. Intelligence estimates of Vietminh capabilities were poor and frequently ignored by overconfident commanders. [ ]

While they were able to develop an effective informant network in Algiers, the French failed to develop adequate intelligence in rural Algeria, impeding military operations there. In the case of insurgencies against British control, widespread popular support for or fear of the insurgents obviated good political or tactical intelligence in Cyprus, Aden, and Palestine. The victorious National Organization of Cypriot Fighters (EOKA) guerrillas in Cyprus were far more effective than the British in collecting and exploiting intelligence in remote villages; the insurgents usually knew in advance the exact nature of British military operations. [ ]

#### **Military Operations**

Military operations remain at the center of any counterinsurgency effort not only to seek and destroy insurgent military forces but also—and more importantly—to protect government supporters and the

general population. The secret of successful military operations appears to be properly tailoring capabilities to the particular threat. In the early stages of most insurgencies, this means using small units deployed in villages and aggressively seeking contact with the enemy by day and by night. Small units that are properly trained, highly motivated, supported by villagers, and familiar with local terrain generally have not needed and have not sought artillery or airstrikes that could injure the local population. Large-scale operations are appropriate only in the later stages of an insurgency when large insurgent units operate conventionally to attack government-held areas or to defend their own bases. [ ]

Small units stationed in rural areas and backed by quick-reaction battalions are the best means for providing security for government supporters and programs and impeding the insurgent political and military organizing efforts. It was clear in almost every insurgency studied that this is best accomplished by an emphasis on mobile rather than a static defense—patrolling the surrounding areas day and night, setting ambushes, and reacting offensively to insurgent sightings. In South Vietnam, the US Marine Corps used small, well-trained platoons of volunteers from regular Marine infantry units called “CAP Teams” (combined action platoons) who lived in Vietnamese villages and worked with local self-defense forces to provide security. Stationed for months in the same village, the members of these units knew the people and the terrain well and were able to obtain detailed and timely intelligence on the local insurgent organization. They were thus able to deny the insurgents freedom to operate. [ ]

Village-level forces must be supported by large unit reaction forces, particularly if the insurgents can mass local forces or move larger forces from other areas to attack villages. In the absence of such reaction forces, villagers will be reluctant to take the risks inherent in joining in village defense and in supporting forces stationed in the village. In South Vietnam, hamlets defended by small, government units were often located in contested areas where reaction forces had

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difficulty supporting them. This made these hamlets especially vulnerable to insurgent attacks. The insurgents were quick to exploit this lack of adequate security by overrunning the settlements, thereby demonstrating to peasants the futility of supporting government forces. [ ]

Defensive military tactics are seldom effective against insurgencies in rural areas during the guerrilla-warfare stage. Initial Portuguese reaction to guerrilla activity in their African colonies, for example, was defensive—aimed at protecting key installations and lines of communication with garrisons—and ceded control of many rural areas to the insurgents. Troops withdrew into defended outposts, relying upon air attacks and only occasional patrolling. All initiative lay with the insurgents. This tactic led to years of virtually unimpeded insurgent political and military organizing in rural villages. In Indochina, French military efforts against the Vietminh for years relied primarily on the defense of key positions. [ ]

Highly mobile regular units operating against insurgent strongholds are a necessary adjunct to village defense measures, particularly if insurgents maintain military base areas. Constant, aggressive strikes by small, specially trained units can also be a partial solution to the problem of insurgent-base areas. In rural Algeria, the French sent carefully chosen units of 60 to 80 men, known as *commandos de chasse*, into the mountains moving on foot and at night, carrying out surprise attacks, and unexpectedly arriving in villages to run to earth the FLN guerrillas. During the late 1960s, the US military in South Vietnam effectively used similar strike teams—independent units of from five to 18 men sent into enemy-controlled territory for several days at a time to harass and trail the enemy. According to Vietcong who surrendered, guerrilla units greatly feared such tactics because—with their ability to lay successful ambushes and call airstrikes without warning—strike teams inflicted heavy casualties and greatly impeded guerrilla operations. [ ]

#### Public Welfare

Public welfare programs are successful in combating insurgency only when they are well designed, well funded, maintained over an extended period, and desired by the people they are to benefit. It is in this

last area that they most often fail. Programs to improve living conditions in rural villages—for example, providing schools, health clinics, clean water, and electricity—have been important adjuncts to most successful counterinsurgency campaigns. These efforts demonstrate government concern over local conditions and a capability to improve them. Such programs can effectively counter insurgent claims that the government benefits only the rich by involving the rural population in public works and self-help projects that directly benefit them:

- During the 1960s, the Guatemalan Army, with US backing, undertook a large-scale welfare program—including the building of wells—in rural areas affected by guerrilla activity. Even one of the Army's leading critics admitted that this program played an important role in the government's ability to maintain rural control.
- In contrast, President Somoza's diversion of relief funds to Somoza-controlled businesses following the 1972 earthquake in Nicaragua and his government's failure to address the population's needs for housing heightened resentment among the population for his government and increased support for the Sandinista insurgents. [ ]

Typically, insurgents initially organize and operate in rural areas neglected by the central government. Here they can exploit longstanding government apathy, and the weak government presence gives them free rein. Public welfare projects that the villagers want, and in which they voluntarily participate, emphasize government concern and provide a means by which people can be enticed into visibly committing themselves to support the government. Such programs have been effective in countering insurgencies in Cambodia, Guatemala, Venezuela, and Thailand. In Thailand, the government improved the administration of public welfare projects by using local people to manage them. [ ]

When public welfare programs flounder, they do so because of a lack of extended commitment, because they are ill conceived, or because they are not wanted.

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For example, the Vietnamese countryside was dotted with poorly situated and unused marketplaces and the remnants of other projects built by US and Vietnamese military and civilian programs without sufficient study or local inquiry about the need for such projects. Many projects stood unfinished because of insufficient funds and diverted resources—a frequent correlate of Third World public works programs. Still other projects, such as many schools and dispensaries, although finished, lacked funding for routine maintenance. Many of these shortcomings were avoided in successful public works programs by involving local residents in the planning, creation, maintenance, and management of the project. [ ]

#### **Economic**

Government economic programs, such as land reform, can encourage villagers to maintain the status quo. They must, however, be established early and implemented vigorously. Any redistributive economic reforms can create enemies as well as friends for the government. The redistribution of church lands by the Shah of Iran, for example, was a major factor in alienating the powerful Shiite clergy. Other governments have found that measures taken to benefit the rural economy, such as crop support prices, may alienate the urban poor. [ ]

Despite the potential benefits, government economic development programs are frequently underemphasized—or ignored—as a counterinsurgency strategy until it is too late. By the time the Portuguese initiated a massive effort to enhance Mozambique's agrarian economy through farm improvements and roadbuilding, the insurgents had already gained the upper hand. In contrast, the British in Kenya eliminated popular support for the Mau Mau by coupling the introduction of black majority rule with agrarian reform and the establishment of a minimum wage. All these programs encouraged villagers to maintain the status quo. [ ]

As with public-welfare programs, effective security must precede economic programs, which generally lead to improvements in physical infrastructure. Without adequate security, improved facilities would be destroyed or used by the insurgents. Economic

programs were effective in Venezuela and Malaya in increasing popular support for the counterinsurgency:

- The Venezuelan Government defeated rural insurgents in the 1960s partially with progressive economic programs begun in 1958—land reform and crop subsidies—financed by revenues from petroleum. These programs, even though predating the insurgency, played a key role in undercutting the propaganda of the extreme left that claimed government indifference and a lack of rural benefits from oil.
- In Malaya government prestige rose as a variety of measures improved the standard of living: farm loans and other agricultural-support measures; regulation of poor working conditions, work hours, and moneylending practices; the encouragement of consumer and producer cooperatives; and the growth of labor unions.

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The Cubans in Ethiopia have used a limited economic program to gain popular support for the status quo. According to a Western Somali Liberation Front guerrilla, they have allowed the local population to use the Djibouti-Addis Ababa railroad which they protect without charge. This has given the local residents a stake in its operation, making attacking it more difficult. [ ]

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#### **Propaganda**

Government propaganda is most successful when it is based on truth and addresses real concerns of the rural population. It can be as vital as armed action in determining who wins:

- The Thai Government has had considerable success depicting the Communist insurgents as outsiders, foreign to Thai customs and culture. This image, coupled with publicity concerning the foreign support the insurgents receive, has diminished their appeal to the Thai population.

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- In contrast, the isolated and repressive Somoza government in the latter stages of the insurgency was easy prey for the highly effective Sandinista propagandists who successfully exploited domestic and international antipathy for the Somoza dictatorship. The Sandinistas were especially adept in associating, in the popular mind, their guerrilla movement with Cesar Augusto Sandino's original guerrilla war against the US Marines. [ ]

At the local level, propaganda programs may be directed at the insurgents, at the civilian population, or at government employees. Propaganda directed at the insurgents is intended to create dissension, disorganization, low morale, subversion, and defection. Directed at the civilian population, it attempts to gain, preserve, and strengthen civilian support for the government. Propaganda directed at government cadre and supporters is designed to build and maintain morale. Although effective propaganda programs must be tailored to local conditions, and because these conditions may vary widely, they are most effective when coordinated at the national level. Coordination at this level helps avoid conflicting themes and programs in different areas and maintains consistency with internationally targeted propaganda. [ ]

Government propaganda efforts aimed at encouraging civilian support for the government have played an important role in most successful rural counterinsurgencies. The most successful programs address local grievances while avoiding themes that conflict with programs elsewhere:

- Magsaysay convincingly addressed the longstanding grievances of the peasants of Central Luzon in the Philippines through propaganda that promised more than was ever delivered. His well-coordinated propaganda program stressed the need for agrarian reform, an end to military abuses of peasants, and the evils of Communist rule in Asian agrarian societies.
- In the late 1950s the Cameroon Government—with French assistance—undermined the popular base of support for the Cameroon People's Union (UPC) insurgency through a well-focused psychological and propaganda effort that was more effective than military operations. Progovernment literature was

widely distributed in insurgent areas, and both important government officials and former rebel leaders, who had turned to the government, made tours addressing village groups and promising pardons to insurgents and their supporters.

- In South Vietnam, however, the size of the American-run propaganda effort, the constant turnover in American personnel, and the lack of time for systematic planning led to numerous "psychological" operations programs with overlapping and sometimes contradictory objectives and responsibilities. The plethora of such programs—often hastily planned by Vietnamese and Americans unfamiliar with local grievances—limited the effectiveness of the propaganda. [ ]

Where propaganda themes are not at least partially based in truth, the rural population is unlikely to rally to the side of the government. In Cuba and later in Nicaragua, government propaganda programs were no match for those of the insurgents because the realities or perceptions of government behavior, as compared with government promises, were too contrary to government promises to be believable. The brutality of the Batista government and economic inequities within the society offset government propaganda promising the Cuban peasants relief. Sandinista propaganda—particularly that accusing President Somoza of stealing from the poor of Managua and from foreign relief funds intended for the victims of the 1972 earthquake—was believed by most Nicaraguans, despite much government propaganda to the contrary. [ ]

#### Terror

Terror is most effective when used selectively. Although both governments and insurgents have used terror successfully, insurgents have often done so more effectively. Government-sponsored terror has most often failed to coerce popular rural support for counterinsurgent forces because it has been indiscriminate—killing the innocents as well as the insurgent supporters—excessive, too public, and poorly planned and executed. In contrast, insurgents have

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been successful more often in using terror because they have been selective and publicized it only to the extent necessary to affect a target population. They usually use it only against clear allies of the government to attain specific political and military psychological objectives such as demoralization of a particular sector of government. [ ]

Successful insurgents clearly attenuate and control terror so as not to drive the general population or international community to support the government. The Vietcong used terror selectively to undermine the morale of government organizations and to force people to support the National Liberation Front. To do this, the Vietcong carefully compiled blacklists of government personnel and supporters who were targeted for assassination or, after the Communists gained control of an area, for punishment. In Communist-controlled and in contested areas, public executions were preceded by trials in "People's Courts" that demonstrated the "justice" and the power of the Vietcong. In all of these cases, the Communists were discriminate and maintained an appearance of justice. [ ]

Government-sponsored terror has failed, or even damaged counterinsurgent efforts in Algeria, Afghanistan, Cuba, Nicaragua, East Pakistan, and Rhodesia:

- In Algeria, the scorched earth policy of French paratroopers was well publicized and skillfully exploited by insurgent propaganda.
- The brutal actions of shortsighted Pakistani military men in East Pakistan during 1971 drove even pro-Pakistani Bengalis to the Mukti Bihani guerrillas.
- In Cuba, the middle and upper classes eventually abandoned Batista's regime and reluctantly supported Castro as the wave of murder and repression spread to their families.
- In Afghanistan, Soviet scorched earth tactics have still proved counterproductive. An Afghan [ ] officer reported in early 1983 that Soviet and government efforts to win the allegiance of rural civilians continue to be undermined by indiscriminate attacks on villages.

- The harsh treatment of Miskito Indians in Nicaragua—including forced evacuation and possible air-strikes against remote villages suspected of aiding insurgents—has recently driven many previously indifferent Indians to join anti-Sandinista insurgent groups.

- In Zimbabwe government-sanctioned killings among the rural civilian population in Matabeleland have strengthened resentment among the Ndebele minority and have persuaded former ZAPU guerrillas incorporated into the national Army to join the insurgents. [ ]

Of the various examples of successful government-sponsored terror, Guatemala and Argentina are notable for their thoroughness in killing most insurgents and their supporters. In the late 1960s, the Guatemalan Army established, or at least tacitly supported, several terrorist death squads that engaged in relatively indiscriminate killing. These irregular forces exterminated anyone they suspected of supporting the guerrillas. Similarly, the Argentine paramilitary tortured and killed anyone remotely suspected of supporting the Montoneros and the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP), thereby decimating the insurgent-support network. In both cases, the government maintained some distance from the terrorism by using death squads or by operating covertly and suppressing press reports. Also, in both cases much of the population was indifferent to the plight of those victimized by the government. [ ]

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Measuring Rural Control

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### Measuring Rural Control

The ability to measure or assess change in government or insurgent control of rural areas is an important element in counterinsurgency efforts. Without reliable assessments the appropriate counterinsurgent strategy or tactics may not be adopted in time.

Beyond this, it is important for analysts following an individual insurgency to be able to monitor insurgent or counterinsurgent progress.

Quantitative indicators such as the number of government public works projects or the number of guerrillas killed in action are frequently proposed for measuring rural control. Such quantitative indicators, however, can signify very different things and, when considered by themselves, may be very misleading. To some analysts, increasing numbers of insurgent combat casualties may reflect growing guerrilla strength and greater willingness to engage in sustained battles using larger units; to others it may reflect insurgent weakness and greater vulnerability to government military operations.

Nonquantitative data have been used and criticized for being overly subjective and anecdotal. For instance, the friendly greeting of soldiers to a rural village may be motivated by genuine support for the government, or by fear of Army reprisals and the desire to appear cooperative to avoid repression. Only an observer who understands the local community well could accurately determine which of these motivations predominates.

Weaknesses in intelligence collection further complicate the analytic problem. In general, the Third World nations—as well as Western nations observing them—do not have an apparatus for systematically gathering data at the local level in countries experiencing rural insurgencies. This is particularly true with the attitudes of peasants toward governments and guerrillas and the status of insurgent organization in specific areas. The lack of analytic understanding or suitable data to assess insurgent and government control has led to numerous errors in tracking past insurgencies (figure 1).

We have identified seven basic indicators to determine who controls a rural area in an insurgency—the government or the insurgents. The accompanying sample questions help measure the strength and direction of the indicator. Which questions should be asked to measure each indicator will depend on local conditions and available data. These indicators focus exclusively on the local rural level, that is, on villages, or, in the case of a dispersed settlement pattern, on groupings of peasants who consider themselves residents of a specific rural locality. The indicators exclude factors at the national level that may have a major influence on government or insurgent capability to acquire rural control. Such factors include foreign assistance to the government or the insurgents, the strength of national-level leadership, national economic trends, and unrest in the capital city. In keeping with our view of the interrelated determinants of control, we attempt no ordering of indicators by relative importance. The relationship of these indicators and determinants to the government programs discussed above is shown in figure 2.

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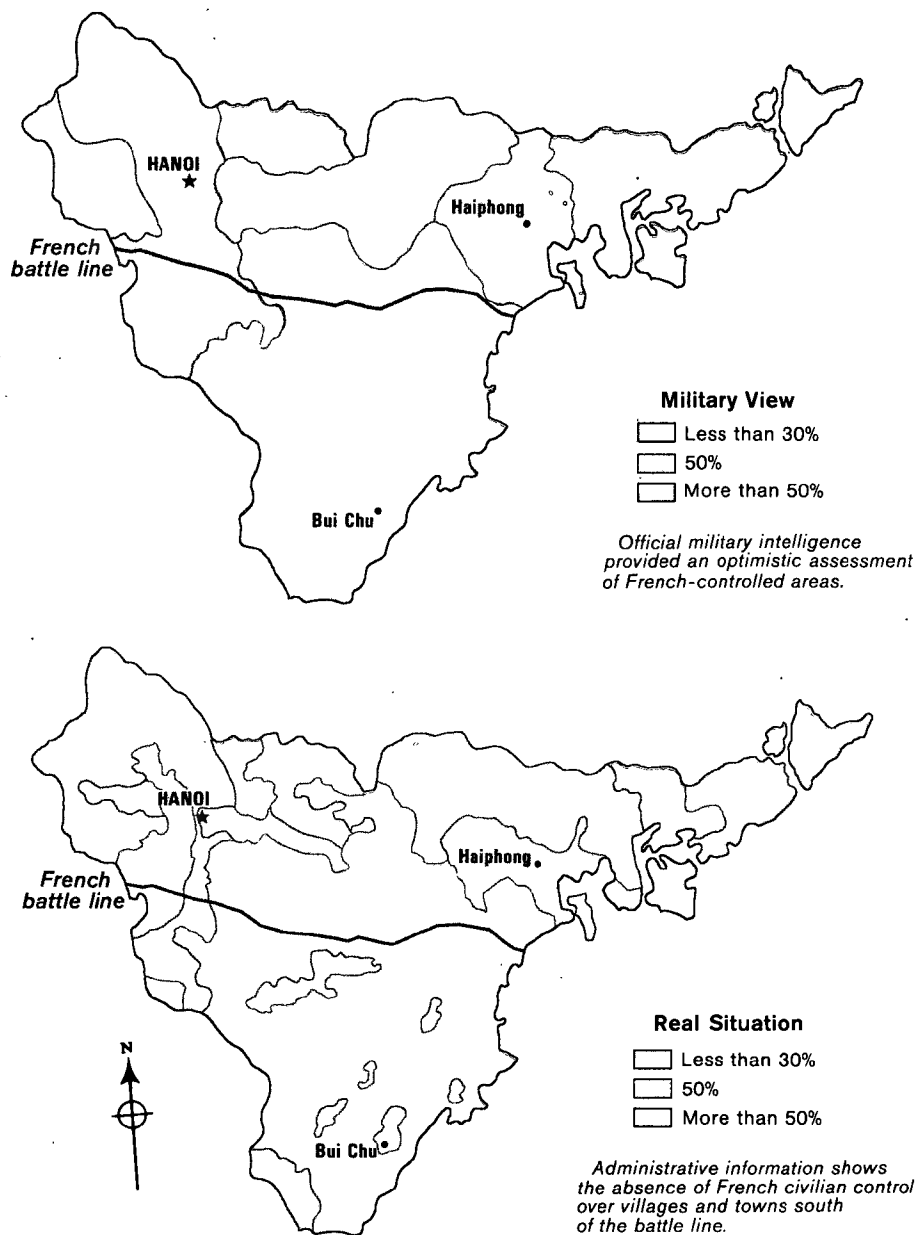
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**Figure 1**  
**Conflicting Views of French Control in Northern Viet-Nam, 1953**



Source: Street Without Joy by Bernard Fall, 1961

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**Indicators of Rural Control****Attitudinal****Favorable attitudes among the local populace:**

- Is the rural population highly receptive to government/insurgent propaganda?
- Are acts of government repression/guerrilla terrorism perceived locally as indiscriminate or discriminate?
- Do government/guerrilla combat operations have exclusively military goals? Or, do combat operations consider the psychological and political impact on the local population?
- Are there government/insurgent policies that the peasants feel are particularly unfair?

**Ability to motivate individuals to take high risks:**

- Are local government officials/guerrilla leaders drawn mainly from the local population?
- Are civilian militias/guerrilla bands composed mainly of local residents?
- What percentage of households in a community have members in the local civilian militia?

**Organizational****Ability of organizations to mobilize and organize people locally:**

- Do the villagers participate in government/insurgent-sponsored civilian activities? Is participation voluntary?
- Are local government/insurgent leaders dynamic personalities capable of injecting vigor into their organizations?

**Ability of organizations to provide material benefits to supporters at the local level:**

- Does membership in government/insurgent organizations provide an opportunity for upward mobility or economic reward?
- Do government programs or guerrilla recruitment significantly improve employment opportunities at the local level?
- Are government services perceived locally as adequate? Or, are there generalized complaints condemning bureaucratic incompetence, redtape, or corruption?

- Is the rural population supportive of government/insurgent programs designed for its benefit (such as land reform, rent control, cooperatives, and credit)?

**Ability of organizations to exploit local resources:**

- How successful are government officials/insurgents in collecting taxes and receiving services and recruits from the local population?
- Do government officials/insurgent leaders implement national government/insurgent directives inflexibly or do they adapt them to local conditions?

**Military****Ability to protect supporters and local population:**

- Do government/guerrilla forces adequately protect local supporters on a 24-hour basis?
- Do national army "reaction forces" respond quickly and effectively to reports of guerrilla attacks on local civilian militias or progovernment communities?
- Do local government officials/insurgent cadre sleep in villages or do they seek protection of armed camps?
- Are national army troops/guerrillas viewed locally as threatening outsiders or as helpful allies?
- Is the local militia seen as a source of protection by the rural population or seen merely as another, distrusted police force?

**Local military effectiveness:**

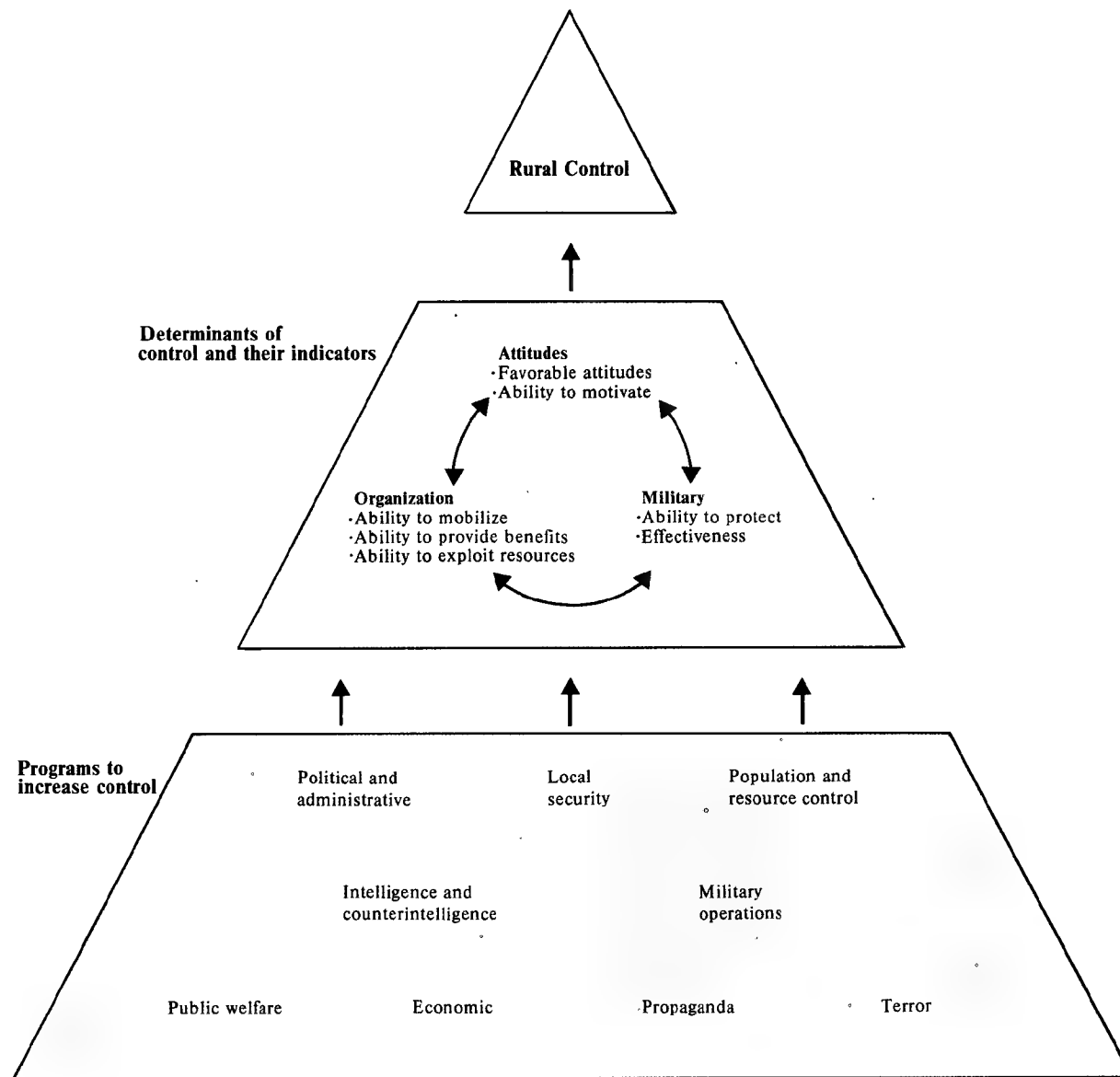
- Are local civilian militias aggressive in small-unit, day and night patrolling? Or, do they avoid contact with the enemy?
- Do government/guerrilla forces have an effective intelligence network at the local level?
- How disciplined are government/insurgent forces in combat? Do they usually recover the weapons and bodies of fallen comrades before retreating?
- Are local government/insurgent forces capable of executing coordinated attacks against nearby enemy strongpoints?

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**Figure 2**  
**Relation of Government Counterinsurgency**  
**Programs to Rural Control**



<sup>a</sup> Direction of arrows indicates causality.

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Guatemala Case Study



Guatemala Case Study

Guatemala's national government—both under General Rios Montt and his successor General Mejia Victores—has maintained or regained control over much of the Western Highlands. For several years before the intensified and innovative government counterinsurgency campaign was initiated in 1982, the predominantly Indian Western Highlands had been the scene of a growing guerrilla movement, stepped-up attacks on the Army, and expanding insurgent control over population and territory (figure 3). Since the summer of 1982, however, the insurgents have been routed in many localities and have suffered a major loss of popular support; they retain only a few isolated strongholds. Some of the gains achieved by the deposed Rios Montt, however, are being jeopardized by Mejia's reluctance to crack down on the resurgence of death squads and by his neglect of propaganda and political measures to gain popular support. The effectiveness of the government's counterinsurgency programs is summarized in figure 4.

Counterinsurgency Programs

Political and Administrative

When Guatemala City began to systematically reestablish control over extensive, contested areas in the Western Highlands, it set out not only to reestablish security but also to forge new political links with rural communities. Rios Montt's reformist officers believed that the historically low level of Indian participation in national political institutions had created a political vacuum filled by insurgent organizations. National-government neglect also was considered a major factor. Guerrilla assassinations or intimidation of local authorities complicated the control task, but the reformist officers were perceptive enough not to blame the abandonment of local governments solely on guerrilla violence.

As the first step in creating new political institutions and modifying old ones, the Rios Montt regime created local *subcoordinadora* councils in contested areas, incorporating some of the personnel and functions of traditional municipal councils. Chaired by the local military commander, the *subcoordinadoras* consisted of appointed or elected representatives of all

Figure 3  
Guatemala:  
Counterinsurgent Rural Control Programs

- Generally effective
- ◐ Effective in limited aspects/areas
- Generally ineffective

Program	Effectiveness
Political and administrative	◐
Local security	○
Population and resource control	○
Intelligence	◐
Military operations	○
Public welfare	◐
Economic	●
Propaganda	●
Terror	◐

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important interest groups in the community, ranging from agricultural cooperatives to religious associations. Local CDF leaders were included, as were representatives of government agencies active in the community. The councils dealt with diverse issues concerning the community and with requests for outside assistance. The latter were ultimately channeled to a national council that was also chaired by the military.

On the basis of interviews we conducted in Quiche Department, we believe this new network successfully bypassed the redtape and delays of the traditional bureaucracy. It appeared that technical, financial, and material aid from Guatemala City to rural communities was disbursed with relative speed and efficiency. We do not know, however, whether the *subcoordinadoras* functioned throughout the Western Highlands. Moreover, it is unclear whether or not the

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**Figure 4**  
**Major Areas of Guerrilla Activity**



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Mejia regime intends to maintain this administrative innovation or return to the traditional municipal system. The creation of Army civic-action companies suggests that the new government intends to uphold the previous commitment to public-welfare improvements in the Highlands, but the government's deteriorating financial capabilities—worsened by the recent US aid suspension—constitute major obstacles. [ ]

In addition, Rios Montt created a National Council of State partly to further the impression that the local population had a voice in the capital city and participated in the national decisionmaking process. This 30-member consultative body included representatives—approved by the national government—of the agricultural, industrial, academic, and labor sectors, as well as of the Western Highlands Indians. Ten members were Indians elected primarily because of their high standing within their communities. Their presence in Guatemala City and statements to the media gave greater visibility to Indians in the national government than ever before. Indian council members publicly expressed concern when the newly installed Mejia regime began to consider abolishing the council in response to rightist political party pressure. [ ]

When Mejia did abolish the council, however, there were no widespread Indian protests. Nonetheless, we believe that this measure was a major blow to the national government's efforts to establish political links with Indian communities. Indian leaders themselves have stated repeatedly that the political party system that Mejia intends to reinstate has never served as an adequate vehicle for Indian aspirations. Given Rios Montt's extensive propaganda efforts highlighting Indian participation in the National Council of State, it is reasonable to assume that Mejia's elimination of that body will result in less credibility for future national-government initiatives of this type. [ ]

Some Indian activists are attempting to accommodate themselves to these recent political changes by allying themselves with the Social Christian Party—and certain other newly formed parties. In terms of rural control, however, this development is far less favorable to the government than the previous situation where the government-sponsored Council of State served as the principal forum for the expression of

Indian grievances. Should assassinations against Social Christians and other opposition parties resume—as under Lucas—the result most probably will be heightened polarization. [ ]

#### Local Security

**Village Self-Defense.** During the latter part of the Lucas administration (1978-82), the Army concluded that it lacked the manpower and logistic support necessary to continuously protect the dispersed population of the Western Highlands. Turning to the historic tradition of civilian militias, the Army began to arm and train progovernment civilians in certain communities. However, this remained a small-scale undertaking, limited by the mutual distrust of the authorities and the rural population in contested areas and the Army's fear that guns distributed in isolated communities could fall into guerrilla hands. [ ]

Rios Montt succeeded in overcoming much mutual distrust by curbing Army abuses of civilians, providing benefits to rural communities and incorporating local men into the counterinsurgency campaign. In contrast to the situation under the Lucas regime, the civilian militias—the CDF—became a key aspect of the counterinsurgency program, expanding rapidly throughout the Western Highlands, to include about 350,000 local men. The new regime of General Mejia has announced that it will strengthen the program, now estimated to include about 500,000 men. Guerrilla reprisals against communities collaborating with the Army in organizing the CDF have not deterred the growth of this local self-defense program. On the contrary, guerrilla attacks against CDF men and their families apparently have fostered popular antipathy for the insurgents. [ ]

The organization and activities of local CDF units vary greatly depending on their isolation, the guerrilla threat, and the degree of popular support for the national government in their communities. In the Ixil towns, for example, these units are relatively well armed and have fought periodically with guerrilla units. [ ]

most of the fighting against the EGP guerrillas in

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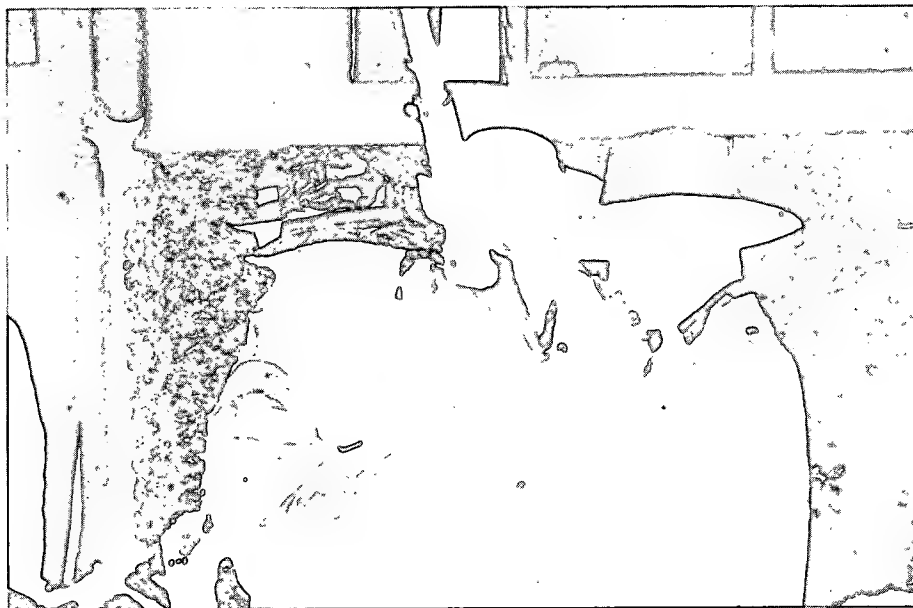
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Figure 5. Guatemala: Army training village self-defense forces.



certain areas involves the CDF, not regular Army troops. In contrast, the CDF in many other towns patrol with machetes and have never fought the guerrillas.

CDF functions include:

- Protecting rural communities and towns through patrols day and night.
- Deterring infiltration of insurgents into communities.
- Gathering intelligence for the Army on guerrilla activities.
- Controlling movement of civilians by identifying and questioning strangers.
- Participating in joint military operations with regular Army units pursuing guerrillas in the countryside.
- Accompanying civilians to fields and other workplaces outside towns to protect them from guerrilla reprisals and proselytizing.

The CDF program has been so successful that some military officers state that the Army is merely supporting these groups in winning the counterinsurgency. They argue that the CDF advantage lies in the militiamen's knowledge of the local terrain, trails and populace, and in their personal stake in protecting their own communities.

Despite the success of the past year, various problems threaten CDF effectiveness. US Embassy reporting indicates that the CDF has become involved in a few local disputes between communities or individuals over land boundaries or other issues unrelated to counterinsurgency. Abuses of power by some CDF members have also been reported, and it is evident that in some areas local men are coerced into joining the CDF. Certain leaders of peasant and labor unions have complained to the US Embassy of CDF persecution, raising the possibility that the CDF may become simply another government-sponsored paramilitary group to suppress agitators. Recently, members of a CDF unit admitted to a US diplomat that they killed a number of suspected subversives.

These problems could jeopardize CDF effectiveness should they become widespread. Given Guatemala's experience with civilian militias, the CDF commanders could become local strongmen. This possibility, as well as potential CDF participation in political party struggles, could create antipathy in the local population toward the government, as occurred under the corrupt administration of General Lucas. The Rios

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**Figure 6. Guatemala: Armed Civilian Defense Forces provide security for villagers going to work in the fields.** [redacted]



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Montt government recognized these problems and intended, through the reorganization of the armed forces, to exert greater control over the military and political activities of the local CDF. We have no evidence, however, that this has been accomplished, and it appears that Army control over the CDF is no greater now than it was under Rios Montt. [redacted]

scattered throughout the rest of the Highlands. During 1983, estimates of the total number of displaced persons in the Western Highlands ranged from 50,000 to 300,000. [redacted]

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**Relocation.** The government faces another security problem—the displacement of people in the Highlands because of guerrilla warfare and military efforts to suppress it. In the Ixil territory and certain other areas, the Army during the Rios Montt regime relocated people to government-controlled towns as a partial solution to the problem of guerrilla control over isolated areas. The Army preferred voluntary resettlement but, during the height of the fighting in the summer of 1982, reportedly used coercion including the burning of villages. At the same time, the guerrillas coerced villagers to abandon their villages and relocate in more remote insurgent strongholds. Most Indian refugees interviewed indicated that they preferred to seek government protection because the insurgents could not adequately feed and shelter masses of people in their strongholds. As a result, large refugee camps developed in Nebaj, Choatalum, and Chisec, with smaller concentrations of refugees

Although the government achieved its short-term goal of removing people from insurgent control, it incurred a heavy financial burden and, because of the steady deterioration of the national economy, had increasing difficulty sustaining the relocated people. Moreover, the influx of families to progovernment communities placed a serious economic and demographic strain on those localities. In Choatalum, for example, an estimated 5,000 Indians threatened by starvation descended on that small village from the surrounding mountains; only rapid Army relief efforts averted a crisis. Because of the financial and logistic problems in feeding and sheltering masses of refugees, Guatemala City's strategy has been to return them to their homes as soon as possible after the area has been cleared of guerrillas. According to the US Ambassador, resettlement has been accomplished in Choatalum and Chisec. Although the national government

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apparently has avoided a potentially major crisis, if fighting escalates, masses of Indians will again descend on Highland towns and Guatemala City will not have the resources to care for them. [redacted]

### **Population and Resource Control**

The CDF is one of the national government's principal instruments for controlling local population and resources. CDF patrols and checkpoints monitor the movements of community residents and strangers, and the registration for CDF duty is a check on the whereabouts of the militiamen. Moreover, giving prominence to local men in policing the community—thus downplaying the role of the regular Army—helps reduce local resentment against the authorities. The CDF also plays a key role in keeping the roads open and discouraging guerrilla roadblocks or attacks on traffic. Journalists and State Department personnel traveling through the Western Highlands have been impressed by the frequency of CDF checkpoints. Before the expansion of the CDF program, the guerrillas had closed some roads and had made travel unsafe in the Western Highlands. These breaks in the transportation system disrupted local commerce and aroused considerable popular antagonism toward the insurgents. Although insurgents can still close traffic in certain areas, government efforts in keeping the roads open are gaining local good will. The few men at each checkpoint cannot stop a determined guerrilla assault, but they can provide surveillance and, if nothing else, give an impression of government presence in isolated rural areas. [redacted]

### **Intelligence and Counterintelligence**

Increased intelligence from the local population of the Western Highlands paralleled Rios Montt's improvements in military relations with local Indians and government efforts to curb abuses of the civilian population. In general, the Rios Montt regime created a trust between the military and the civilian population that was absent during the Lucas regime. This was possible partly because of Guatemala City's demonstrated determination to maintain a permanent political and military presence in Highland communities and its integration of local men into its security apparatus through the CDF. These actions led many Indians to the government side [redacted]

The amnesty program led to many insurgent defections, and these defectors greatly increased the military's pool of information on the enemy. Amnesty was part of a broad government effort to reduce repression and use voluntary inducements to support the government. The government also improved intelligence by emphasizing more humane interrogation of captured guerrillas and by other efforts to gain their long-term cooperation. The situation under Mejia is similar, but the resurgence of death squads may jeopardize the trust established by Rios Montt between the authorities and the people. [redacted]

[redacted] institutional rivalry will probably continue to hamper coordination at both the national and local level. [redacted]

### **Military Operations**

In the last year of the Lucas regime, the Army responded to increasing insurgent strength in the Western Highlands by highly mobile, large sweeps in areas where guerrillas were believed to be concentrated. However, the guerrillas generally did not stand and fight. These tactics resulted in death for large numbers of civilians, and their effectiveness is difficult to judge. Rios Montt made important modifications in tactics by focusing on the following main points:

- Military units were stationed in the principal population centers to end guerrilla occupations, executions of government supporters, and propaganda rallies.
- Small-unit tactics were emphasized using patrol bases in the mountains and aggressive patrolling by soldiers.
- Large-scale sweeps were undertaken in areas where there were reports of guerrilla camps or concentrations of guerrillas.
- Defense of towns when the garrison was out operating, or standing down, was increasingly left to the local residents through the CDF, thus freeing the regular units to pursue guerrillas in the mountains.

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**Figure 7. Guatemala: Army officer reassures an isolated Indian community that the government will provide aid and security.**



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We believe this strategy was successful in protecting government supporters, while destroying or harassing guerrilla bands. Once bold enough to attack and overrun departmental capitals and military garrisons, the guerrillas scaled down their operations significantly and largely confined themselves to hit-and-run ambushes of military vehicles and to attacks on isolated communities protected only by the smaller CDF forces. After the August coup against Rios Montt, counterinsurgency operations initially slowed down, but Mejia seems to be following the basic strategy of his predecessor. The military advantage clearly remains in the hands of the government, but the guerrillas are gradually increasing their attacks.

The success of the Rios Montt military strategy was facilitated in part by the mobilization of 5,000 additional soldiers on short notice for an emergency six-month tour of duty. The government intended to restrict this group to veteran reservists, but, in practice, it also accepted new volunteers, who often proved to be unexpectedly effective. In each of the three major Ixil towns, for example, a full company of local Indians was recruited, trained, and armed. These companies proved to be very capable because, like the CDF, the local men knew the local terrain and people much better than regular troops brought in from other

regions. The salaries paid and the Army's trust shown by providing them with weapons normally used only by regulars apparently greatly increased Ixil good will for the government.

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To preserve the gains of the Rios Montt counterinsurgency campaign, the armed forces are undergoing a fundamental reorganization geared toward increasing effectiveness in local military operations. For example, the government has divided eight military zones into 22 zones. Although we believe that the reorganization ultimately will benefit counterinsurgency at the local level, it probably will seriously strain military manpower and logistic resources over the short term.

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#### **Public Welfare**

The government has focused its public-welfare programs in the Western Highlands on two sectors of the population: the residents of the major population centers and the refugees or defectors from insurgent-controlled areas. Following Rios Montt's admonition that victory in counterinsurgency consists not in killing guerrillas but in killing the hunger of the peasants, the *subcoordinadora* councils accelerated public

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works and facilitated outside help to rural communities. By building and staffing health clinics, constructing roads and wells, and completing other types of public works projects, the national government sought to demonstrate that it could effectively provide benefits at the local level. [redacted]

In dealing with the refugee population, we believe that the Rios Montt regime demonstrated willingness and effectiveness in meeting the food, housing, health, and employment needs of the refugees. General Mejia apparently intends to maintain the effort. We see such government actions as a key in the loss of popular support for the insurgency and in the Indian migration to government towns. The present national economic deterioration, however, threatens the government's financial capability to sustain relief efforts, and some observers conclude that public-welfare programs—both under Rios Montt and Mejia—have been effective only in some localities, not throughout the Highlands. Moreover, the recent suspension of US assistance—to protest the murders of Guatemalan AID employees—further hampers the ability of the Mejia regime to implement public-welfare programs. [redacted]

#### Economic

Compared with programs having a more immediate and direct impact on counterinsurgency, the Mejia regime has assigned a low priority to economic development. The national economic downturn in Guatemala necessitates defining strict priorities in allocating scarce resources. Although counterinsurgency planners recognize the potential link between economic development and support for government, Guatemala City does not have the resources to systematically implement an economic development program in the Western Highlands. However, by organizing and financing diverse public works projects, the government itself has become a major employer in some Highland communities and a major source of income. [redacted]

#### Propaganda

Guatemala City's domestic propaganda efforts became more effective after the military coup that brought Rios Montt to power. Rios Montt himself was a boon to government propaganda because he projected an image of honesty, reform, and nationalism. His

image contrasted greatly with the brutal and corrupt reputation of Lucas and his clique. The major themes in the new propaganda campaigns were:

- The national government and the Army express solidarity with the Maya Indian heritage.
- The Army protects the Guatemalan people and plays a positive, key role in local and national development.
- Guatemalan guerrillas commit atrocities and do not represent popular aspirations.
- The government is fighting alone and thus is more genuinely nationalistic than the Guatemalan guerrillas who are supported and manipulated by foreigners.
- The best way to further local economic and political aspirations is to support the national government. [redacted]

In contrast to Rios Montt, Mejia has not given a high priority to public relations. Mejia does not enjoy the popular image Rios Montt enjoyed, nor is Mejia likely to emulate his predecessor's personal involvement in propaganda. Although we expect official propaganda to follow nationalistic lines similar to those of the previous regime, we believe that the various measures by the present administration will seriously undercut the potential appeal of populist propaganda. The elimination of the National Council of State—with its highly publicized Indian participation—has not been followed by any credible countermeasures conveying government desire to forge links with Indian communities. In their public statements, the top authorities of the new government are not employing the populist rhetoric that enhanced Rios Montt's propaganda programs [redacted]

Government propaganda efforts, moreover, are seriously hampered by the lack of trained personnel, financing, organization, and planning for systematic dissemination of propaganda in the countryside. Frequently, Indians living in isolated villages hear the progovernment message only when a periodic patrol arrives and the commanding officer gives a speech translated into the local dialect. The government does not have a permanent cadre of propagandists living or traveling in the countryside; the CDF fulfills that role only in certain areas. [redacted]

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**Terror**

We believe that the Rios Montt regime's use of terror at the local level discouraged support for the insurgency without alienating masses of people. Indiscriminate terror by the Lucas regime was one of the main reasons for the 1982 coup, as well as for the growing antipathy for the authorities in the Western Highlands civilian population. Although Rios Montt renounced the blatant human rights abuses characteristic of his predecessor, terror was a successful—albeit decreasing—element of his counterinsurgency campaign, particularly during the summer of 1982. Terror clearly hurt Guatemala City's international relations and seriously complicated its efforts to obtain foreign aid. Nonetheless, our judgment is that local people in the Western Highlands came to view the wrath of the security forces as being directed primarily at the guerrillas themselves or those guilty of supporting the guerrillas. The key to this change in popular perception apparently was the regime's concern to sharply focus terrorist repression. The use of terror, moreover, was counterbalanced with blandishments and inducements to voluntarily support the government. During 1982, for example, the same Army that burned villages to convey to the local population the high cost of supporting the insurgency also offered protection and a guarantee of livelihood to those who relocated to a government-held town. This carrot and stick strategy effectively countered the guerrillas' own use of terror. [ ]

Because the guerrillas and soldiers both used terror, terror was not a distinguishing factor between the two adversaries in the eyes of the local populace. What distinguished them were other behavior and programs; these differences were the central failure of the insurgency. The peasants perceived the Army as increasingly willing and able to provide security and material benefits; the guerrillas provided neither. Immediately after the military coup against Rios Montt, the military's use of terror remained low. However, recent US Embassy and press reporting indicates that terrorism controlled or tolerated by the Mejia regime is on the upswing. Rural and urban victims are "disappearing" again, including US AID bilingual program employees. Press reports indicate that the monthly death toll is gradually rising since Mejia took power. Embassy reports of conversations with rural inhabitants reveal a growing fear that a

major escalation of indiscriminate repression is in the offing. We have no evidence to suggest that this will occur, but the fear itself will not help the government cause. [ ]

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**Indicators of Government and Insurgent Rural Control**

Guatemala's rural control programs generally have furthered the goals of the government's counterinsurgency campaign. Although the guerrillas continue successful hit-and-run ambushes, our attitudinal, organizational, and military indicators suggest that the national government has far greater capabilities for exerting local control than the insurgents. The relatively enlightened reforms and goals of the counterinsurgency campaign initiated by Rios Montt could be undermined, however, if current budgetary pressures force Guatemala City to draw back from projecting a strong presence, particularly in the remote areas of the Western Highlands. [ ]

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**Attitudinal**

*Favorable Attitudes Among the Local Population.* We believe that most Western Highlands Indians feel they were badly treated and deceived by the guerrillas and that they are being better treated by the government. Our conclusions are based on interviews with Indians who had formerly supported the insurgents or had lived under insurgent control—accounts confirmed by more recent interviews by journalists as well as by US Embassy reporting. Having fruitlessly suffered for supporting the insurgency, many Indians have developed a strong antipathy for the insurgents and their propaganda—a striking change from the situation in 1981-82 when the insurgent cause seemed to enjoy greater popularity than the government's. The population's attitude changed rapidly because the insurgents failed to deliver promised security and material benefits to followers. Moreover, as government pressure intensified, the insurgents increased demands for food and services from the local population, thus promoting the perception that the insurgents' program was unfair and unreasonable. [ ]

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The Rios Montt government increased good will by putting emphasis on avoiding indiscriminate repression and on local psychological and political considerations in planning combat operations. Although isolated repression continued, press and US Embassy reports suggested that most Indians came to view the Army as more discriminative in its use of force. We do not know of any government program that is viewed by the Highlands Indians today as particularly unfair to them. Our judgments on the attitudes of Highlands Indians, however, are based on fragmentary evidence; we lack systematic attitudinal surveys or regular reports from informed local observers. Furthermore, the recent increase in political violence may jeopardize the generally favorable attitudes toward the government. [ ]

***Ability To Motivate Individuals To Take High Risks.***

Active, highly motivated insurgents are much less in evidence today in the Western Highlands than during the height of the insurgency in 1981-82. During that period they made themselves felt not only in the greater effectiveness of military operations against government forces but also in gains in recruiting and organizing local people. Their activity and effectiveness against the government has significantly declined. We do not know, however, the number of cadre that existed then or how many were subsequently killed, fled, or simply ceased revolutionary activity. We assume decreased activity reflects decreased numbers, but there is a chance that the insurgents could be still strong and lying low awaiting a change in the political climate. [ ]

According to a variety of sources, the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP) made a major effort in past years to recruit and train local leaders and combatants; consequently, we assume that surviving EGP bands include a majority of local people. By contrast, the other two guerrilla organizations, the Revolutionary Organization of the People in Arms (ORPA) and the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR), do not seem to be following a strategy of community-based guerrilla bands. [ ]

In contrast to the insurgents' declining ability to motivate people, the government has made rapid and extensive gains in developing committed local cadre and supporters. The government is deliberately seeking to develop a core of reliable local leaders to carry

out Guatemala City's directives, and, with the exception of regular Army officers, most of the authorities in a locality are men from that same locality or region. This reliance on local leadership has enhanced efforts to mobilize and organize people. The unprecedented expansion of the locally based Civilian Defense Forces—now encompassing an estimated 500,000 men—signifies that a relatively high percentage of the male population of the Western Highlands is openly committed to the government. Notwithstanding reported CDF frustration over lack of significant Army tactical or logistic support in certain areas, various CDF units have repeatedly shown their commitment to the government by aggressively pursuing and attacking guerrillas. [ ]

***Organizational***

***Ability To Mobilize and Organize People at the Local Level.*** Although scattered EGP guerrilla bands remain active in the Western Highlands, the government's counterinsurgency campaign has destroyed the greater part of EGP capacity to mobilize and organize the rural population. [ ]

[ ] in certain areas the EGP had earlier succeeded in mobilizing and organizing people through the establishment of Local Clandestine Committees (CCL). These committees generally functioned in the numerous, isolated communities where there was no government presence or where government representatives lacked effective administrative or coercive power. The insurgents often used coercion to organize local people, and many Indians mobilized by the CCL were forced into the cause. When the government counterinsurgency campaign weakened the insurgents' coercive power, this involuntary organization of the Indian peasantry unraveled in most localities. Now the EGP is severely limited in its ability to mobilize and organize people. (ORPA and FAR are not as affected because traditionally their reliance on a local support base has been far less than the EGP.) [ ]

Through the CDF and enhancement of local government effectiveness, Guatemala City has successfully mobilized Indians in communities formerly dominated by the EGP. The Mejia regime is attempting to

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replicate this success throughout the Western Highlands; however, we do not know how much hidden resentment remains among Indians who have experienced government coercion, or the threat of it. Nonetheless, we believe, on the basis of observations, as well as US Embassy reporting, that the majority of the Indians participating in government programs see benefits in doing so and that, overall in the Western Highlands, far greater willingness exists to participate voluntarily in government programs than in those of the insurgents [redacted]

***Ability To Provide Material Benefits to Supporters.***

Membership in insurgent organizations, whether as an armed militant or a supporter, seems to provide little or no benefits; nonetheless, some militants may continue to believe that time is on their side and that the insurgency will regain momentum. We have reports that some guerrilla units receive salaries, but this information has not been corroborated. Given the low fortunes of the guerrilla bands at present, we doubt that they have the resources to offer regular salaries. The insurgents clearly failed to fulfill their promises of material benefits to local communities; rather, the guerrillas disrupted the transportation and commerce that the Highland Indians depend on for their livelihood. The guerrillas also proved unable to fulfill their promises to protect their Indian followers from violent government reprisals. [redacted]

Although Guatemala City also is strapped for financial resources, it has implemented public works and the CDF programs that benefit the Indians. The public works programs directly benefit local workers by providing them with salaries or food. These programs have evidently gained good will for the government in the Ixil Triangle and probably in other areas. The CDF program that encompasses most of the Western Highlands does not include the payment of salaries. However, by keeping roads open and protecting residents and visitors in Highland communities, the CDF militiamen have played a key role in reviving local and regional commerce. The economic impact of the CDF is even more direct in those communities where the CDF has allowed workers to return to the fields safe from guerrilla kidnappings or assaults. In interviews with CDF members, some dissatisfaction was displayed over certain delays in Guatemala City's response to community requests for assistance. The

majority of Indians, however, believe Guatemala City is better able than the insurgents to provide benefits to its supporters [redacted]

***Ability To Exploit Local Resources.*** In early 1982, the EGP controlled manpower, agriculture, and other resources in several large areas, but now the EGP only controls the resources of a few, remote strongholds. ORPA and FAR have acquired large but undetermined sums of money through extortion, but they exert little control over resources in the countryside. Guatemala City, on the other hand, has undisputed control over resources in most of the Western Highlands—a capability it has reinforced by the large-scale mobilization of local manpower through the CDF, administrative reforms, and a greater military presence in previously isolated communities. Both local, military, and civil authorities seem flexible in implementing the directives of the national government and are adapting them to local conditions. The guerrillas, however, also are flexible in implementing orders at the local areas. [redacted]

***Military***

***Ability To Protect Supporters and Local Organizations.*** The failure of the guerrillas to protect their own supporters—admitted in captured documents and corroborated by interviews with former supporters—is a key factor in the widespread loss of support for the insurgency in the Western Highlands. The guerrillas' campaign of increasing ambushes of Army troops was premature because they overestimated their political and military abilities. As a result, we believe that active insurgent cadre now live primarily in a few insurgent strongholds in the mountains where they can better protect supporters. We have virtually no reliable information on the number of insurgent cadre residing or operating in local communities outside these strongholds, but we assume that it is small. Guerrilla bands now appear to be viewed in most Indian communities as unwelcome troublemakers. [redacted]

The government has generally protected its supporters. An important indicator of security is that local officials usually sleep in their own communities or in those communities where they are assigned. The population in general views the CDF as an effective

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source of protection from insurgents, a perception fostered partly by the fact that CDF duty usually is a rotational assignment served by all able-bodied men of the locality. However, the guerrillas have killed CDF members and their families. While these massacres certainly have not promoted support for the insurgency, they have impressed upon the rural population that the insurgents remain a force to be reckoned with, notwithstanding government successes. Regular Army forces, in contrast, are overcoming their reputation for indiscriminate repression. A lack of helicopters and the transportation and communications problems caused by the rugged mountains and equipment shortages sometimes prevent national Army "reaction forces" from responding quickly to guerrilla attacks on local CDF or progovernment communities. [REDACTED]

***Military and Intelligence Effectiveness.*** The insurgents' military and intelligence capabilities have declined considerably, compared with the government security forces. At the height of their power, the guerrillas had an extensive and effective intelligence network at the local level. In light of the drastic loss of support among the populace and the government's success in establishing control over Highland communities, we believe that this intelligence network has been seriously damaged. [REDACTED]

Government intelligence, on the other hand, has improved considerably, owing to the emphasis placed on improving relations between the Army and civilians and on incorporating local people into the struggle against the guerrillas. Militarily, both the regular Army and the CDF stress small-unit tactics and are aggressive in day and night patrolling. The level of military training received by the CDF typically is rudimentary, and consequently we would not expect them to perform proficiently in combat. We have no reports of major problems with CDF performance, however; the forces have only abandoned their weapons or casualties when overwhelmed by vastly superior enemy forces. Some CDF units occasionally join

regular Army forces in coordinated attacks on insurgent strongpoints. Army officers praise CDF participation in these operations because of their superior knowledge of local terrain. In contrast, insurgent forces have lost the ability to overrun provincial capitals, although small units continue successful ambushes and usually withdraw in good order with equipment and casualties. [REDACTED]

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Philippines Case Study

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**Philippines Case Study <sup>1</sup>**

Philippine military officers have repeatedly warned US Embassy officials that, unless the civilian government combats social problems and eliminates graft and corruption, the armed forces will never be able to eliminate the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army (CPP/NPA). Manila's widely publicized political, economic, and military programs have been ineffective, and local officials—beneficiaries of a well-entrenched system of political patronage based in Manila—are either unable or unwilling to effect any real change (see figure 8). Consequently, the government's civil and military rural control programs have failed to arrest, let alone reverse, the growth of the Communist insurgency, and the CPP/NPA now controls 18 percent of the rural villages in the Philippines. In addition, the Communists have increased by about 60 percent the number of rural *barangays*—the lowest level in the administrative hierarchy of government—fully under their influence (see figures 9 and 10). [ ]

**Counterinsurgency Programs****Political and Administrative**

During its 18-year tenure, the Marcos regime has become excessively bureaucratic, inefficient, and largely incapable of exerting political and administrative influence in many areas of the Philippines, particularly those where it is seriously challenged by the CPP/NPA. Although political change is needed, the regime seems intent on preventing any important sharing of either its political or economic monopoly. Despite his rhetoric, Marcos is relying principally on a military approach for defeating the Communists. [ ]

According to a reliable US Embassy source, in many of the most active insurgent areas—parts of Samar, Northern Luzon, the Bicol region, and Mindanao—civil government administration has ceased. Local

<sup>1</sup> This discussion addresses only the current Communist insurgency in the Philippines, directed by the Communist Party of the Philippines and its military faction, the New People's Army (CPP/NPA). The Muslim insurgency of the Moro National Liberation Front and its armed faction, the Bangsa Moro Army (MNLFBMA) is confined to the southern Philippines (see figure 6) and does not seriously threaten the stability of the Philippine Government. [ ]

**Figure 8**  
**Philippines:**  
**Counterinsurgent Rural Control Programs**

- Generally effective
- ◐ Effective in limited aspects/areas
- Generally ineffective

Program	Effectiveness
Political and administrative	◐
Local security	◐
Population and resource control	●
Intelligence	◐
Military operations	●
Public welfare	◐
Economic	●
Propaganda	●
Terror	●

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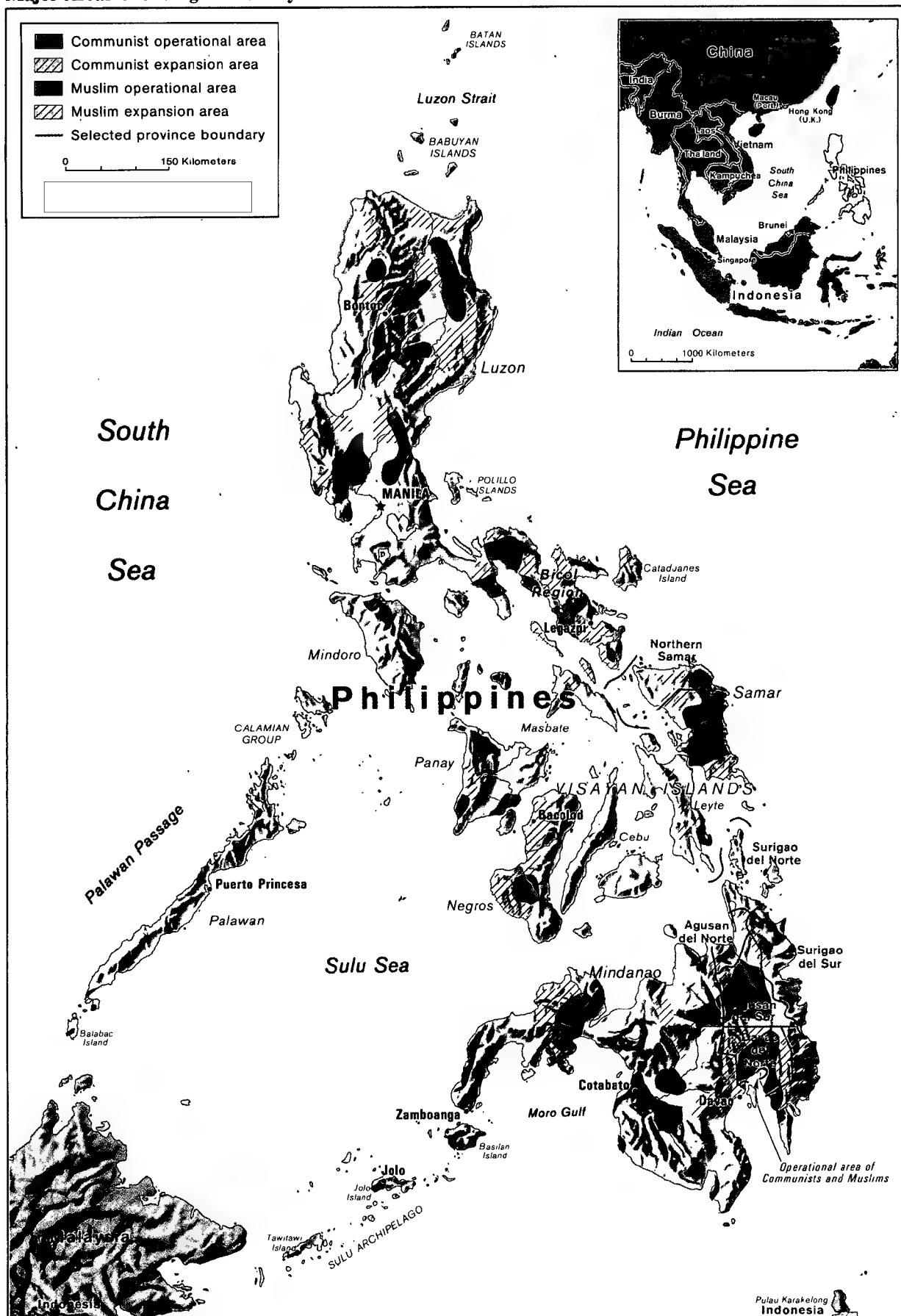
officials often will not visit villages under their jurisdiction. The legal system does not work. A regional judge from northern Mindanao told a US Embassy officer that few murder cases ever reach his court; most are blamed on the NPA, even though the NPA is responsible for only a fraction. Even where the government functions, it is often corrupt and ineffective. The Philippine Constabulary is strongly disliked because of its abusive behavior, public works officials are renowned for diverting funds from local projects, and postal workers steal money orders and food mailed to rural residents. [ ]

The well-publicized "Katatagan" National Security Campaign—the principal political program designed to contain and eliminate the CPP/NPA insurgency—has also foundered. Devised by the armed forces in early 1983, the strategy calls for a four-stage coordinated military and civilian effort. First, the military

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**Figure 9**  
**Major Areas of Insurgent Activity**



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clears the insurgent-affected areas of enemy armed groups through combined combat and civil-military operations. Next, the civil government agencies enter the area and deliver essential services. Then, the courts work toward redressing popular grievances. Finally, the civilian agencies establish a permanent sense of security and implement self-sufficient economic projects to improve living standards. According to the US defense attache, this plan has failed because of the inability and unwillingness of civilian government agencies to support a strategy designed by the military. [ ]

#### Local Security

**Village Self-Defense.** Village self-defense forces have played an important role in Philippine counterinsurgency efforts ever since the 1950 campaign against the Huks, and they have evolved into an integral part of the government's current counterinsurgency campaign. In the early 1970s the Constabulary armed these units and assigned them locally to work with five-man Constabulary detachments permanently stationed in villages. The self-defense units protected the village against insurgent attacks and, more importantly, detected and prevented attempts by insurgents to contact the village population. In 1974 the government amalgamated these local defense forces into a national Civilian Home Defense Force (CHDF) [ ]

The CHDF now comprises at least 47,000 men—lightly armed civilians organized along military lines—who often operate jointly with regular Army or Constabulary units and serve as a buffer between local villagers and members of the armed forces drawn from other regions. The force, which sustained nearly as many combat casualties in 1982 as the regular armed forces, has allowed the Army in the south to redeploy battalions that have been fighting guerrillas for many years. [ ]

Training and utilization of CHDF personnel varies markedly from region to region, and thus it is difficult to assess the overall effectiveness of the program. In Mindanao and Leyte, for example, the government has systematically developed local CHDF units, and they have increasingly assumed responsibility for counterinsurgency operations against both Muslim and Communist guerrillas. In these areas, CHDF groups are under special counterinsurgency unified

commands and are trained by Special Warfare Brigade Teams. This frees regular Army and police units for rapid-reaction and civic-action roles. Elsewhere in the Philippines, however, many CHDF units led by the Army Reserve Command suffer from a lack of support from local Army commanders and have reputations for poor discipline and abuse of their authority. Some CHDF personnel sell their guns to the highest bidder, reportedly often the NPA. [ ]

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**Relocation.** For several years Philippine security forces have attempted to protect the population of strongly contested areas from the insurgents by pressuring villagers to relocate in heavily guarded settlements.<sup>2</sup> Military commanders inform residents in targeted villages suspected of supporting the NPA that they will be considered NPA sympathizers if they refuse to move into garrisoned and fortified areas. The garrison imposes curfews at night and treats the surrounding countryside as a free-fire zone. It frequently requires relocated families to contribute "volunteer guards" and to provide food for military detachments posted in the village. Catholic human rights investigators—linked by reliable US Embassy sources to the CPP/NPA but probably accurate in their assessment—report that by 1979 the government had forcibly relocated more than 50,000 persons in Samar, and by 1982 more than 200,000 had been relocated in seven Mindanao provinces. [ ]

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The current relocation policy has, in our judgment, failed primarily because the military has not been able to provide these transplanted Filipinos with many of the basic necessities of life. Because of poor conditions in relocation sites and the lack of adequate logistic support, malnutrition, disease, and inadequate housing are common complaints. These difficulties provide ready-made propaganda for the insurgents. Although publicity surrounding this Vietnam-style "strategic hamlet" policy led Defense Minister Enrile to order an end to the practice in March 1982, recent US Embassy reports indicate that local commanders continue to confine thousands of families in temporary hamlets in Mindanao. [ ]

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<sup>2</sup> This tactic was first used at the turn of the century by US forces in the Philippines to successfully isolate insurgents led by Emilio Aguinaldo. In the mid-1970s the government used it to deter support for Muslim rebels in western Mindanao. [ ]




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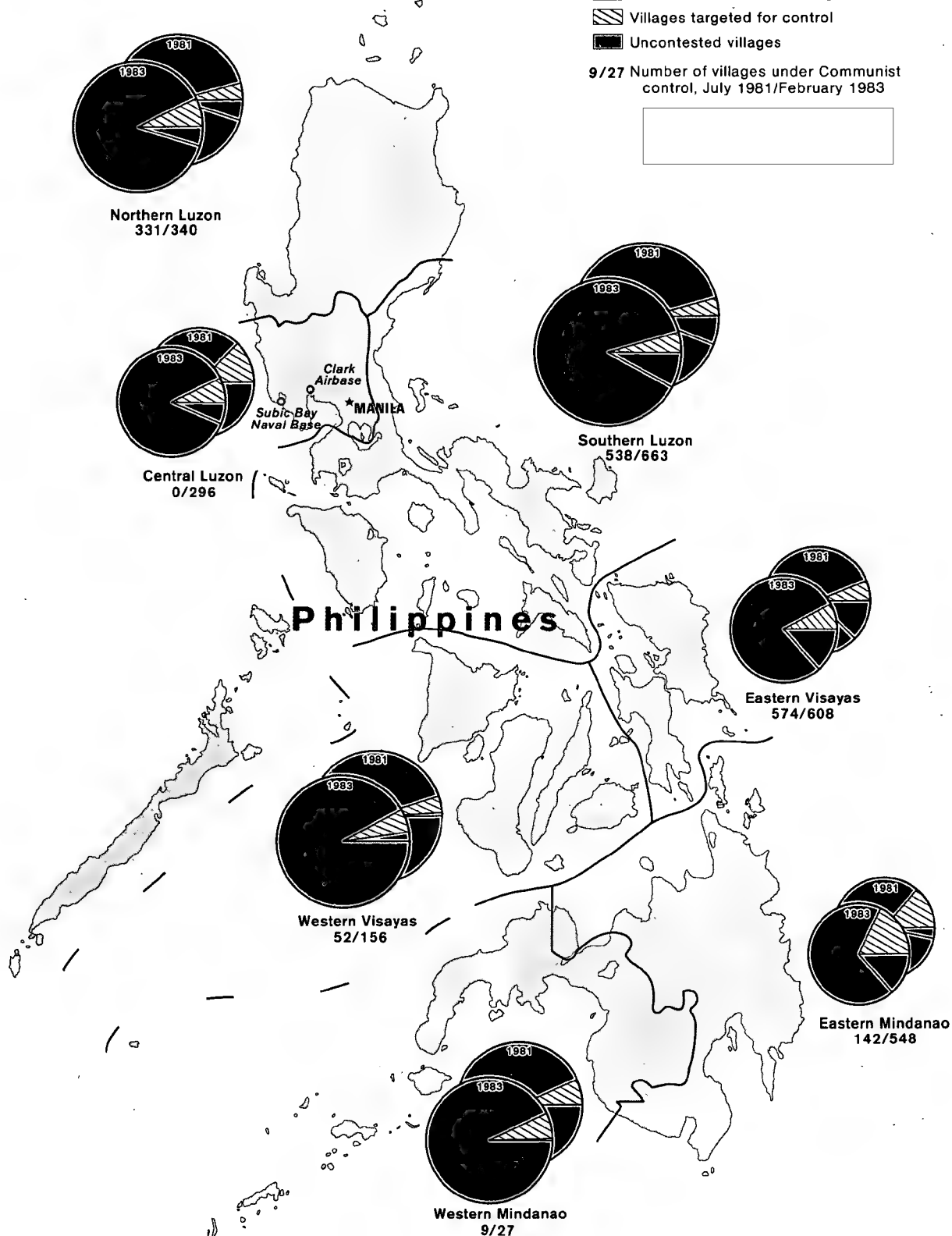
**Figure 10**  
**Increase in Communist-Controlled Villages**

-  Communist-controlled villages
-  Villages targeted for control
-  Uncontested villages

9/27 Number of villages under Communist control, July 1981/February 1983



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**Population and Resource Control**

In our estimation, the Philippine security forces have the apparatus to effectively control the population and to protect and control resources, but are thwarted in these endeavors by poor implementation and widespread corruption. Military checkpoints, for example, are common throughout the Philippines but are badly administered, easily avoided, and frequently serve as extortion points for the military and police. The Constabulary and Integrated National Police, who should implement population- and resource-control programs, have a poor reputation and can elicit little cooperation in tracking insurgency. Local military units have imposed a protective curfew in many areas, particularly where they have relocated villagers, but the restriction irritates farmers who complain that there is not enough time to reach distant fields and markets. Should the insurgents alter their present avoidance strategy and begin to attack elements of the Philippine economy, the government's already deficient security apparatus will be severely taxed. [REDACTED]

**Intelligence and Counterintelligence**

Given the success of Philippine intelligence in capturing high-level insurgent leaders, the government probably has an accurate view of the growth of the CPP/NPA organization. The government has identified most of the CPP/NPA's national and regional leadership, and well-placed agents provide a continuing flow of information concerning its key decisions and strategic thinking. In 1982, 16 regional and national CPP/NPA leaders were captured or killed, and two surrendered. This record compares favorably with that of past insurgencies worldwide. [REDACTED]

The government has a serious problem, however, obtaining timely intelligence information at the village level. According to US Embassy reporting from Northern Luzon and Mindanao, the NPA quickly finds and executes government informers, causing village populations to refrain from passing tactical intelligence to local security forces. The military believes that in many rural areas the insurgents have established an efficient intelligence network to monitor the movements of government forces. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] President Marcos has criticized his intelligence chiefs for their failures at the grass-roots level and has complained that 60 to 70 percent of the intelligence budget has been going into the pockets of military commanders instead of those of village-level agents and informers. [REDACTED]

The government is moving on several fronts to deal with these village-level problems, but two of their major initiatives suffer from serious flaws. A plan calling for a minimum of two paid intelligence officers in each of the 43,000 *barangays* using the Ministry of Human Settlements as cover is overly ambitious and may never occur because of a lack of funding. The 1984 intelligence operations budget for the Constabulary—the principal collectors of intelligence on the insurgency—has been cut by 30 percent. The Army is organizing Regional Intelligence Coordinating Centers (RICC) intended to facilitate the collection, coordination, and integration of intelligence in support of tactical operations, but military intelligence units consider themselves in competition, and commanders fear being upstaged by rival units. [REDACTED]

**Military Operations**

The Philippine Army and the Constabulary are ineffective in their approach to counterinsurgency military tactics:

- [REDACTED] Constabulary units often establish fixed positions rather than conduct patrols and travel only on safe routes to avoid contact with the insurgents. Although they are expected to live off the land while searching for the guerrillas, members of the Constabulary frequently steal what they need. This confiscation of supplies alienates the populace. [REDACTED]
- The Army conducts large unit sweeps using blocking forces to prevent guerrilla escape. Because such operations are difficult to organize secretly, the insurgents often have warning of the Army's activities, which allows them to avoid contact during the sweep and to return to swept areas after the Army has withdrawn to garrison. Most military units also avoid night operations thereby granting the insurgents a free hand for activities after dark. [REDACTED]

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In April 1983 the armed forces began a major reorganization designed to improve military operations against the insurgents, but subsequent attache reporting shows that only superficial bureaucratic changes are being made. The 13 Regional Commands—formerly commanded by Constabulary officers—are reorganizing into Regional Unified Commands (RUCs), ostensibly to improve command and control in each region. A new, highly trained elite reaction force—composed of approximately 21,000 Army scout rangers, Navy seals, Marine quick reaction forces, Air Force special warfare troops, and Constabulary forces retrained as scout rangers—is to provide support for the Unified Commands. In fact, however, both the Army and the Constabulary are only redesignating existing units as elite forces with minimal retraining. This eliminates one of the most important characteristics of such units—the selection of highly trained, motivated, and disciplined personnel. [ ]

#### **Public Welfare**

The government has achieved few successes in its efforts to improve rural public welfare. In many areas government presence is lacking and only NPA personnel and missionaries serve the local residents. Projects aided by foreign governments, such as the Australian Government's roadbuilding program in Samar and the US-aided Bicol River Basin Project, may eventually improve the lot of some villagers, but they will have only a slight impact given the massive needs. [ ]

Military civic-action units have made limited attempts to fill the void created by the lack of welfare services in many remote villages. [ ]

[ ] an unarmed military medical team operating from 1979 to 1982 in NPA-controlled areas in the mountains of Northern Luzon, Samar, Leyte, and Northern Mindanao was successful in gaining the respect and gratitude of much of the population. Press reporting indicates that during 1982, Army medical and dental teams treated nearly 6,000 villagers in the Bicol region as part of the military's psychological campaign. Information on the extent of similar programs elsewhere in the Philippines is unavailable. [ ]

#### **Economic**

The National Livelihood and Development (KKK) Program—announced with much fanfare in mid-1981 as Manila's answer to poverty and Communist subversion—holds almost no promise of addressing the economic needs of the rural Philippines. Although the program is intended to spur economic and social development nationwide and help every village, town, and city attain economic self-sufficiency, the US Embassy feels that it is too modest in design to create sufficient change. Furthermore, the program is plagued by an overly centralized administration better known for politically attractive ideas than for results. [ ]

The program operates through subsidized loans for small, labor-intensive agricultural, manufacturing, and service projects. The central government assists further by finding domestic and international markets for goods produced. Priority beneficiaries are supposed to be those considered most susceptible to CPP/NPA propaganda—landless workers, upland farmers, ethnic minorities, and urban slumdweller—but they have received little benefit. [ ]

#### **Propaganda**

For years the Philippine armed forces have singled out the large number of insurgents and their supporters who have supposedly surrendered as evidence of progress in defeating the insurgency. [ ]

high-ranking Constabulary officers often arrange for large numbers of villagers to "surrender" to impress their superiors in Manila. Many of those who surrender are farmers merely suspected of being sympathetic with the NPA, who receive a monetary reward for participating in the ploy. The officers who arrange the mass surrenders often receive commendations and, according to newspaper reports, may receive kickbacks from the villagers. Such shams are part of the reason the Marcos government is losing the psychological war to the CPP/NPA in many rural areas of the Philippines. Cardinal Sin, leading spokesman for the Philippine Catholic Church, believes the government has no credibility with the people, and 62

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percent of Manila's top business leaders surveyed in a recent opinion poll rated the national government's credibility as poor. [ ]

The government's credibility is further weakened by the fact that development of the rural countryside—frequently touted as a cornerstone of the Marcos government's policy—remains an unfulfilled promise nearly everywhere. The Communists are quick to exploit this failure for its propaganda value; coconut farmers are shown Manila newspapers with the latest commodity market quotations and asked to judge for themselves who benefits from the wide disparity between what they earn and the prices shown in the paper. A Philippine officer assigned to the Davao area recently told our Ambassador that many local officials in Mindanao believe Communist propaganda that accuses Marcos's cronies of exploiting local farmers in their foreign-financed agribusiness ventures. In other areas, NPA-armed propaganda teams visit villages and turn the government's public relations efforts to their advantage; a government-distributed picture showing a newly built road is displayed to make the point that only the rich and middle class can afford the luxury of riding in the cars shown on the road. [ ]

#### Terror

There is no systematic program to employ terror as a counterinsurgent tactic at the local level, but government military and paramilitary units frequently resort to arbitrary and indiscriminate intimidation of the rural population. Arbitrary arrests, disappearances, torture, and summary executions attributable to the government are common.<sup>3</sup> Senior officers recognize that such terrorism is counterproductive and plays into the hands of insurgent propagandists but are either unable or unwilling to stop it. Government claims that military wrongdoers are increasingly being punished are contradicted by the light punishment

<sup>3</sup> Task Force Detainees—a Catholic human rights group that is

[ ] controlled by Communist cadre—reports that during a 15-month period ending March 1983 there were 1,516 arbitrary arrests, 146 summary executions, and 42 disappearances attributable to government forces. Such reports, whether true or inflated, are widely read and given much credence throughout the Philippines [ ]

given offenders—reassignment or dismissal. A prison sentence for military offenders is rare. We believe the government's counterproductive use of terror is one of the principal reasons for the growth of the Communist insurgency. [ ]

The government's reputation has been further tarnished by rumors and international press reports linking senior government officials with the deliberate creation of paramilitary terror groups. Reliable US Embassy sources state that senior Constabulary officials recruited armed forces officers and enlisted personnel for such a group—The Lost Command—in February 1973. The original concept was a small, hard-hitting commando group that could operate secretly and with minimal command and control to neutralize Muslim and Communist insurgent groups in Northern Mindanao and Samar. However, these commandos soon became accustomed to the absence of constraints. In September 1981, 35 civilians, including women and children, were massacred by The Lost Command operating jointly with local CHDF forces in Barrio Sag-od in Northern Samar in retaliation for an NPA attack on a logging company owned by Defense Minister Enrile. Today, The Lost Command has several subordinate units, with estimates of overall strength ranging from 50 to 500 men. The units are augmented occasionally by CHDF and armed forces personnel. The command operates in an area from Samar and Leyte to Agusan and Surigao Provinces and has entered the Davao and Cotabato areas of Mindanao [ ]

#### Indicators of Government and Insurgent Rural Control

Attitudinal, organizational, and military indicators all suggest to us that the Philippine Government is making little progress with a seriously escalating insurgency. The CPP/NPA is gradually expanding its control over much of the rural Philippines—[ ] the CPP/NPA is organizing villagers in 39 guerrilla fronts nationwide—while the government's military campaigns and well-publicized development programs are failing

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because of poor leadership and inadequate implementation. In those villages they control, the insurgents' political organizations are functioning effectively. Most of the people are sympathetic toward the insurgents, provide them with material support, and can be mobilized against the government for mass actions. In many of these villages, a guerrilla militia has been organized to support the NPA and protect cadre and supporters. [redacted]

#### Attitudinal

##### *Favorable Attitudes Among the Local Population.*

The Philippine public is skeptical of Manila's efforts to improve local standards of living. Years of highly publicized development programs have yielded few concrete results. An opinion poll taken in 1983 shows that nearly one-third of the population feels living standards are deteriorating, a significant increase compared with the number of Filipinos who shared this feeling when the same question was asked in 1981. In addition, the 1983 poll shows a majority of Filipinos have no confidence that the government will find solutions to their problems. [redacted]

The military—particularly the Philippine Constabulary—has acquired a well-deserved reputation for abusing the rural civilian population, which discounts any claim by the military leadership that abuse is no longer tolerated. Local military and paramilitary forces confiscate farmers' food supplies, arbitrarily arrest and detain suspected subversives, physically abuse people, and summarily execute suspects. Communist Party propaganda exaggerates and publicizes the military's poor reputation. [redacted]

In contrast with their attitudes toward the government, a significant number of rural Filipinos are favorably disposed toward both the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army. A captured member of the Central Committee of the CPP claims—and his military interrogators agree—that 35 to 45 percent of the population of Northern Luzon can be relied upon to support the CPP/NPA. A recent opinion poll—confined to areas not under CPP/NPA control—disclosed that of those willing to express an opinion concerning the Communist Party, 83 percent in Mindanao, 50 percent in the Visayas, and 18 percent in Luzon expressed a positive opinion.\*

\* In all three areas, however, only four out of 10 individuals polled were willing to express an opinion concerning the Communists.

[redacted]

The CPP/NPA generally uses persuasion to promote and maintain favorable attitudes among the people; cadre resort to intimidation and coercion sparingly. The NPA does not tax excessively and uses force only after repeated warnings. The insurgents work hard to demonstrate that their victims are guilty of a serious crime against the people and indeed, in most cases, those chosen for punishment are already notorious for corruption or abuse. [redacted]

##### *Ability To Motivate Individuals To Take High Risks.*

The Philippine Government—for nearly two decades firmly controlled by Marcos's ruling KBL Party—has little ability to motivate people in rural areas. The government demands little from most of the population and, in turn, provides few benefits. Rural barrio residents generally view the government as distant and avoid interacting with officials because such occasions yield abuse, frustration, or—even when some benefit is derived—humiliation. The Civilian Home Defense Forces—increasingly responsible for counterinsurgent operations against Muslim and Communist guerrillas—apparently vary widely in their capability and willingness to fight. In some areas they are effective while in others they sell their guns to the highest bidder. [redacted]

[redacted] even many local KBL officials—fearful of the Communists—could not be motivated to run for office in 1982. [redacted]

In contrast, although its numbers represent less than 1 percent of the total national population, the CPP/NPA has steadily grown in committed supporters since its founding in 1969. Morale within the party and the NPA appears to be high: there are few defectors—most of those who defect are villagers who receive a monetary reward for “surrendering”—and the CPP/NPA continues to attract adherents despite the increased risk they will be involved in combat. Philippine intelligence estimates CPP/NPA supporters at 7,500 NPA regulars, more than 13,000 militia and self-defense forces, and 150,000 civilians in its village organizations. At a recent party meeting, the CPP Central Committee claimed to have 15,000 NPA regulars and an additional 10,000 militia. We estimate the party to have about 8,000 political organizers and other types of cadre, many of whom are probably not included in the numbers above. [redacted]

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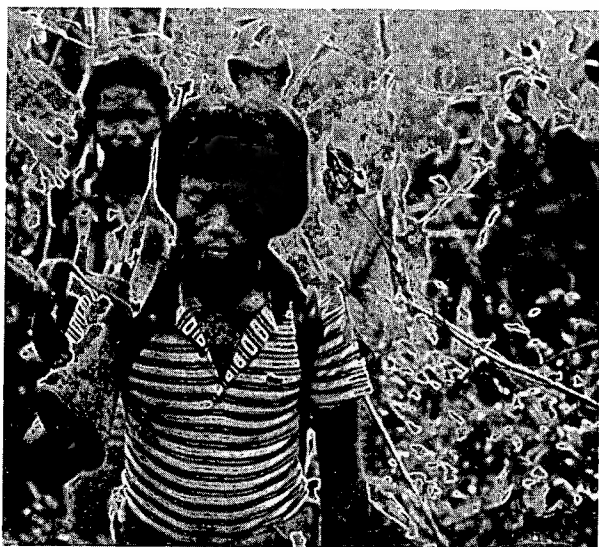


Figure 11. Philippines: Many CPP/NPA leaders are university-educated local youth.

Captured party leaders say that they have had their most success in organizing the religious sector through united front activities. Priests, nuns, and lay leaders are highly respected by peasants and motivate many to join the revolution. Additionally, other NPA leaders, many of whom are locally born middle class youth who were radicalized while university students, gain the respect of poor farmers by their willingness to forgo seemingly lucrative careers and endure the hardships of life in the hills.

#### Organizational

**Ability To Mobilize and Organize People at the Local Level.** The Philippine Government has been ineffective in organizing and mobilizing people at the local level. Eighteen years of KBL Party control of government have resulted in local political systems frequently characterized by favoritism and entrenched sinecures more responsive to the demands of Manila than to those of the local population. Loyalty to the president and the KBL is repaid by opportunities to gain money and power, but these benefits do not trickle down to the rural poor, most of whom are untouched by their government.

in many cases only local officials benefit from economic development funds allocated for private-sector projects.

The insurgents, by comparison, have steadily improved their ability to organize cadre and the local population in most rural areas.

approximately 18 percent (7,800) of all rural *barangays* are now effectively controlled by the CPP/NPA. The CPP/NPA is actively organizing barrio populations in 39 guerrilla fronts nationwide. The CPP/NPA has gained strength and support, even in those provinces where the government's military presence is the strongest. The government's military campaign to rid the Bicol of NPA in 1982 was not only unsuccessful, but, according to US Embassy reports, the region has a much greater NPA presence today than it did a year ago.

As CPP/NPA control is consolidated in one area, military and organizing activities are transferred to contiguous areas. Party strategy dictates—in line with the Chinese and Vietnamese model—that political organizations of the rural population is the key to political victory. Military action is considered less important at this time and attempts to permanently control territory are considered counterproductive (figure 12)

#### **Ability To Provide Material Benefits To Supporters.**

The Communists provide their cadre and supporters with only limited material benefits. The CPP/NPA platform rests on promises of advantages to the poor in a new Philippines "where the rich and the foreign exploiters won't take all the wealth of the people." Captured guerrilla leaders reveal that CPP/NPA cadre and guerrillas receive no regular compensation—although their families receive a small stipend—and that the guerrillas lead a spartan existence, often lacking food. Party cadre emphasize to their followers that those who join the struggle are part of a long Filipino tradition of revolutionary heroes.

For rural villagers who support the CPP/NPA, cadre emphasize the party's land reform program and stress that their ability to achieve land reform should be interpreted as a key measure of the success of their

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### *The Communist Strategy for Organizing a Village*

*The CPP/NPA uses a classic strategy—modeled on the teachings of Mao Zedong and Ho Chi Minh—to win control of rural barrios. Armed propaganda teams visit barrios in areas targeted for expansion and may spend more than a year slowly weaning the villagers away from the government. The strategy, spelled out in captured documents, consists of four stages:*

*Infiltration. Cadre and party sympathizers, often nuns and lay Catholic Church workers, visit the barrio, frequently using the cover of legitimate activities. Their tasks are to evaluate the local security and political situation and to identify both sympathetic and hostile residents. A barrio liaison group is formed among sympathetic residents. This stage may last from a week to a month.* [redacted]

*Preparatory. Armed propaganda teams visit the barrio, showing residents that the NPA has the military muscle to come and go at will without government interference. They provide the residents with their view of the political situation and may reinforce their message by publicly threatening locally unpopular individuals with "people's justice" if they fail to reform. Although public executions are infrequent—most individuals comply by the third and final warning—it is generally understood that NPA justice is swift and uncompromising. During this phase, which may last three to four months, village associations representing peasants, women, and youth are formed.* [redacted]

*Consolidation. Cadre consolidate the party's hold on the barrio by setting up an organizing committee as the lawmaking body of the already established peasant's association. A self-defense force, the first step in*

*organizing armed groups, is also formed. By the end of this stage—which may last from six months to a year—a barrio branch of the Communist Party has been organized.* [redacted]

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*Mass Organization. CPP/NPA usually takes at least a year to complete its control of the barrio. During this final phase, representatives of the various barrios form a barrio association. The insurgents have by then effectively neutralized government presence in the village—probably never very strong—and are in control.* [redacted]

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*The government generally does nothing until reports are received that a barangay is fully politicized. A typical response includes the preparation of a report and a one-day visit to the village by a team of civilian and military officials. During this visit a caucus is held with the people to determine their problems, needs, and grievances—probably the same ones presented to a similar group that visited them two years ago. Free medical and dental care is also administered and progovernment propaganda distributed.* [redacted]

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*[redacted] the rural folk are skeptical of the empty promises of officials and frequently react with disbelief and passivity. In contrast with the CPP/NPA who visit for months and befriend the villagers, government and military officials rarely visit the villages and are considered strangers, neither to be trusted nor believed.* [redacted]

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*local organizing efforts. In the CPP Central Committee newsletter, *Ang Bayan*, the party claims some success in forcing landlords to reduce rents and in stopping absentee landlords from collecting rents in the Cagayan Valley, Samar, the Bicol, and Mindanao. In some areas the party has helped limit local*

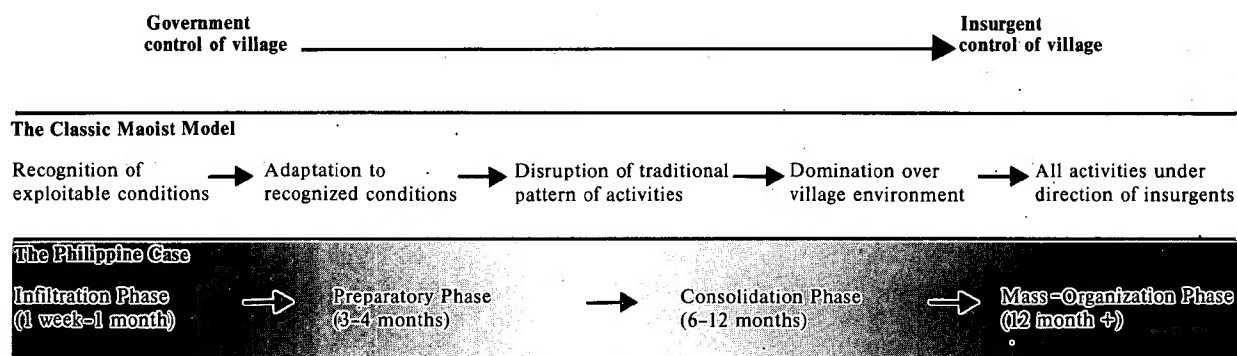
*banditry, land grabbing, corruption, and brutality by local officials. Party members also give villagers practical advice about farming matters and health. Like China's "barefoot doctors," they stress herbal medicine and acupuncture.* [redacted]

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**Figure 12**  
**How Political-Oriented Insurgencies**  
**Establish Village Control**



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Manila's ability to provide material benefits to government supporters in a nation of 53 million is limited. The National Livelihood and Development (KKK) Program is the government's primary local economic program and is directly controlled by Imelda Marcos. It is aimed at benefiting the rural population and thereby countering insurgent claims that the government serves only the rich. In the two years since it was proclaimed as the economic centerpiece of a "New Society," however, the program has directly aided less than 1 percent of the Philippine population. According to US Embassy sources, critics contend that the KKK is another of the First Lady's public relations gimmicks, which, although politically attractive, lacks substance. Local intelligence officials frequently report graft and misappropriation of KKK funds by local officials, but there is no evidence that Manila dissuades such action or punishes guilty officials. [ ]

**Ability To Exploit Local Resources.** The survival and growth of the CPP/NPA nationwide suggest its ability to exploit local resources. Each of the 16 regional

Party Committees in the country is responsible for financing its own revolutionary activities with no known dependence on foreign sources for funds. Recently captured NPA tax collectors in Davao del Norte—one of 39 active rural guerrilla fronts—have estimated monthly Communist collections in that province alone at \$100,000. In areas under some degree of Communist influence, the CPP/NPA levies taxes on a progressive basis. Poor families pay little, but more prosperous families, including those of schoolteachers and owners of small shops, are expected to pay more. Business taxes are assessed according to the size of the company's operations and its ability to pay. Although the CPP/NPA has exhibited flexibility in collecting taxes, the threat of force is ever present. [ ]

The insurgency has not diminished the government's ability to exploit resources in rural areas. The Communist guerrillas have not targeted agriculture, agribusiness, forest products, or mining operations for

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Figure 13. Philippines: Armed propaganda team conducts political meeting for villagers. [redacted]



destruction because these resources provide needed funds for the CPP/NPA through taxation as well as incomes to otherwise unemployed families. In addition, many of these corporations have reputations for treating their employees fairly. [redacted]

We do not know the effect of the insurgency on the government's ability to collect local taxes nationwide. The Philippine Bureau of Internal Revenue is notoriously inefficient and corrupt, and few people have ever met their tax obligation. US Embassy travelers in the Bicol report that wealthy landlords who have stopped collecting rents from their tenants under NPA pressure have also stopped paying taxes to the government. [redacted]

#### Military

**Ability To Protect Supporters and Local Organizations.** The government is increasingly unable to protect its supporters from NPA reprisals in areas where the NPA is active. In most of these areas government security forces may appear in control by day, but the NPA rules at night. More government workers—96 local officials and development program specialists—and civilians were assassinated last year than ever before; two NPA defectors were assassinated in a well-guarded Constabulary mess hall. In Central Luzon, Negros, and the Bicol, many fearful landlords

have opted to avoid rural areas, and, in Negros, according to the US Consulate, 12 of the 33 municipal mayors now reside in Bacolod, the capital city. A very reliable US Embassy source describes the Cagayan populace as demoralized and afraid and believes it supports the NPA, primarily as a means of survival. [redacted]

Mistreatment and abuse of the local population by government soldiers is *random*, NPA contact is more *predictable*. NPA violence is more focused and specific, leaving little doubt in people's minds which behavior will bring retribution and which is needed to earn a degree of protection. [redacted]

**Military Effectiveness.** Low morale, a disillusioned officer corps, inadequate training, and poor discipline—a major reason for abusive behavior toward the rural populace—are growing problems for the counterinsurgency efforts of the Philippine armed forces. In June a senior officer in Northern Luzon admitted that the campaign there is foundering under the weight of these problems, growing CPP/NPA strength, and a population that distrusts the government and is sympathetic to the Communists. Most

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**Figure 14. Philippines: NPA guerrillas lead a spartan existence in the boondocks and are feared less than the military by many villagers.** [redacted]



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government units avoid combat and patrolling, and refuse to return fire when ambushed by the guerrillas. The Army General in charge of Mindanao operations recently acknowledged that "paper patrolling"—when units avoid combat but report completed patrols to headquarters—is common. [redacted]

In spite of the military's shortcomings, the government continues to recruit enough soldiers. A military career provides opportunities for young men who would not otherwise find employment in the stagnant Philippine economy. Many of these recruits are not, however, of high caliber and are cashiered at the end of their two-year training period. [redacted]

The aggressive advantage belongs to the NPA, which, according to Philippine intelligence, now initiates 60 percent of all armed encounters. Consistent with Mao Zedong's emphasis on controlling the population, not the land, the NPA does not attempt to permanently control rural territory and immediately disengages to minimize losses when faced with superior government forces. [redacted]

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[redacted] the NPA frequently succeeds in obtaining weapons from government troops through well-executed ambushes. Because of a lack of external material support, the weapons procurement tactic has become a key objective of current NPA military strategy. [redacted]

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